

**Second Session - Thirty-Eighth Legislature**  
of the  
**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**  
**DEBATES**  
and  
**PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report**  
**(Hansard)**

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Eighth Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
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ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
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DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
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JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
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NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa	Seine River	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
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TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, May 14, 2004

The House met at 10 a.m.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

#### COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

#### HEALTHY CHILD MANITOBA

**Mr. Chairperson (Harry Schellenberg):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now be considering the Estimates of Healthy Child Manitoba. Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

**Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister responsible for Healthy Child Manitoba):** Yes, I do, Mr. Chairperson.

Healthy Child Manitoba is a wonderful proactive health program. It deals with keeping children and families healthy, and it is a wonderful program. It starts with a number of very progressive, positive programs in making mothers and families stronger. I will explain some of them. The first one is the BabyFirst program which is basically working with young families. It is getting home visitors, it is talking about the importance of breast-feeding, it is talking about the importance of activity, nutrition, building families. So the BabyFirst, Early Start programs basically have about 1300 homes being visited by home visitors. It is a very proactive approach.

We also have the early childhood supplement which gives up to \$82 for young families or mothers to help financially to ensure that they have appropriate nutrition and food supplements, and they can have a few dollars to be proactive as far as food nutrition and being able to afford the baby that is soon to come.

It also has programs such as the EDI, the early development instrument, which focusses on when kids enter the school system, around Christmastime

they are evaluated. It is a very important evaluation tool because what happens is instead of evaluating kids after the fact, what they do is they sit there and they analyze the skills and abilities of the child at Christmastime. By doing that they find out what skills are deficient. Then they can work within the community, within community groups, within parent-child coalitions, day cares and with parents themselves, so that they can work to ensure that kids have the appropriate skills at an early age.

As we know, through Fraser Mustard and the work of others in the early development instrument community, if you can change outcomes, the most important change, the biggest change you can have is when the kids are young. So what you want to do is you want to make sure that the kids have an appropriate start and what you will then have is you will have long term better health outcomes. So things like the EDI, they measure skills, abilities, what the kids are able to do. That really strengthens your society because what you do is, say, if you find out that kids do not have the appropriate literacy skills or social interaction skills, you can take a proactive approach and work to develop skills, programs, work with parents to make sure that the kids have those skills.

There are a number of other programs such as Turnabout, Teen Talk, that are very proactive about kids, getting them to learn about their behaviour. There is the STOP FAS program which is really good because it not only has the peer program, it also has a lot of education programs out in the community, posters, information and working with multiple providers to STOP FAS. It also provides money to the FAS support group, parent support group. There is "Nobody Is Perfect." There is Mary Gordon's program, Roots of Empathy, that is supported through this program, which is teaching kids the importance of empathy. It has talked about the importance of breastfeeding again. It is talking about how important it is to love others, support others and understand the true words of empathy. That program is delivered at Grade 1 and Grade 5. What happens there is kids learn the importance of non-racism, non-hate. It learns how to support and work with others. It is a very, very good program.

The basic premise is that what you want to do is you want to support families early. You want to be proactive. You want to make sure that kids have the support they need to be successful in society in the long term.

The Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet is unique. What it is, we have ministers across the Government that basically work together to support each other, to make sure that the kids have the healthy start that they need. I am pleased to chair that committee. We meet regularly. On behalf of Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, I think it is a wonderful statement about what our province is all about. Every province has treasury boards which talk about costs, departmental, financial issues. We have a cross-departmental child issue committee and that is important.

Manitoba values and supports our children for who they are today and throughout their whole development into adulthood. Research has shown that children who grow up in safe, healthy, nurturing environments have a better chance to reach their fullest potential. A child's earliest years build upon the foundation for success in the school years, in optimal health, in well-being for the children's years from then and forever.

We work across departmentals through sectors to facilitate community development approach for the well-being of Manitoba's children, families, communities. We really focus on infancy and the pre-school years, and we even work with mothers and families before the baby is born. Since April 2000, Manitoba has increased investments for early childhood development by over \$58 million in that time period. Of this investment, in 2000, 2004, 2005, \$18.5 million was provided by the federal government through the Early Childhood Development Agreement. So Manitoba spends by far the majority of the money in this area.

Manitoba is led by the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet. I chair that committee. The other departments that are involved are Aboriginal and Northern Affairs; Culture, Heritage and Tourism; Education, Citizenship and Youth; Family Services and Housing; Health; Justice; and the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Ms. Allan).

It has been wonderful to work with this group of people who are committed to the children of our

province. Some of the major programs that are offered in this department are the Parent Child coalitions, BabyFirst and Early Start home visitors program, Healthy Baby Prenatal Benefit and the Community Support Programs, the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Prevention Program and Support Programs, Health Adolescent Development Program and many, many others.

We also provide a lot of grants to external agencies that do good work in the community. In 2004-2005, despite the fiscal challenges, Healthy Child Manitoba will receive an overall increase of about 3 percent to further support these commitments. This increase demonstrates our Government's commitment to healthy children and families and the community.

The funding we have allocated has enabled us to provide an additional \$1.3 million to expand two programs that provide important supports to the parents of young children. The additional funding will expand the BabyFirst and Early Start programs which are both home-visiting programs and provide a wide range of supports to eligible families.

BabyFirst provides a three-year home visiting mentoring program for newborns and their families based on initial universal screening with services being offered to families identified with significant risk factors. The program is delivered through our regional health authorities. This year's funding will expand the service by approximately 200 additional families. I was pleased to make that announcement at Heritage Community Centre with Jan Sanderson and other people just about a week and a half ago. It was a wonderful welcome program. People think that it is money well spent and well invested.

In 2004-2005, we have allocated approximately \$1.8 million to programs to enhance children's readiness to learn prior to the school entry. Early Start provides a three-year home visiting program for families with children who have special social needs and are currently attending licensed childcare. Expanding on last year's pilot of an integrated model of BabyFirst and Early Start, an additional \$400,000 has been allocated to expand the successful implication of the initial three regions in employment program delivery to two additional regions.

\* (10:10)

We are committed to ensuring that all children arrive at kindergarten ready to enjoy the benefit from school experience. In 2004-2005, funding of \$50,000 has been committed to expand Healthy Child Manitoba's provincial research and evaluation strategy to include the use of early development instrument or EDI.

The EDI measures how ready your children are for the challenges of school learning. The outcomes from the EDI will provide a measure of success for our early years programming and an evidence base for future years.

It is also important to note that the EDI instrument has moved to almost 70 percent as far as voluntary uptake and that is wonderful because schools, school divisions have realized the importance of early intervention and early understanding of where the kids are. This is a true form of testing and what is neat about it is that the voluntary uptake of this program has increased continually and it is now approximately 70 percent in a voluntary fashion. So it is nice to see the school divisions understand the true importance of this wonderful tool.

In 2004-2005 we have allocated \$94,000 for the Turnabout program. Canada's only province-wide pilot project for children under 12 who come into contact with laws being made with this permanent provincial support. Turnabout standardizes the way police, workers in Justice, child welfare and school systems in the community deal with young people too young to be charged for acts that may otherwise be prosecuted under federal criminal code. It is to try to get kids out of the cycle of criminal activity before they become entrenched in those behaviours. It is a good program working with Justice and other departments.

Within the 2004-2005 our Government is pleased to be able to maintain support for innovative successful programming such as Healthy Baby, parent-child approaches, and the parent-child coalitions. Over \$5 million has been committed to the Healthy Baby program through the provision of a monthly financial benefit for low-income pregnant women and a network of Healthy Child Committee Community Support Programs. Participating women increase their awareness of health and parenting choices, increase their sense of community, increase their sense of support, and it is really wonderful to

see the activities of these programs. I have had the pleasure of attending a number of them and it is great to see the strength in community.

The parent-child approach brings resources together through community coalitions across the province which support parenting, improve children's nutrition and literacy, and build community capacity for helping families in their own community. The Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet and Healthy Child program signal a new way of working together by the commitment to concrete action for early development. Building on the existing foundations and developing new initiatives was the priority focus in the early years. The partner departments of Healthy Child Manitoba continue to promote the best possible outcomes for all Manitobans' children. That means physical and emotional help, safety and security, successful at learning and being socially engaged and responsible.

The early years of childhood set the stage for a child's physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development. I am pleased that our Government has recognized the early childhood development as a priority today, so that we can build healthier and vibrant communities for tomorrow. Our Government's commitment to supporting families and communities is demonstrated by the significant funding we have provided in this area and the steady increase in funding throughout our mandate.

I look forward to this committee's review of the 2004-2005 Estimates of Expenditures for Healthy Child Manitoba and welcome the comments of all committee members. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairperson:** We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic, the honourable Member for Charleswood, have any opening comments? The floor is yours.

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Mr. Chairperson, I do not have an opening statement, just a question regarding process. I am assuming that we will, as in past practice, spend some time on a global discussion prior to getting into line by line.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Is it the will of the committee to have a global discussion or go line by line?

**Mrs. Driedger:** A global discussion, Mr. Chairperson.

**Mr. Rondeau:** That is acceptable, Mr. Chairperson.

**Mr. Chairperson:** All right, it is agreed upon to have a global discussion. The floor is now open for questions. But we will first invite the staff forward and we will ask the minister to introduce the staff.

**Mr. Rondeau:** I am very pleased to introduce Jan Sanderson, who is the Executive Director of the Healthy Child Manitoba.

**Mr. Chairperson:** All right. The floor is open for questions.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I would just like to welcome Jan Sanderson to the table and welcome the minister, too, to the first set of Estimates for Healthy Child for him. I guess we will get right into questions then.

I would like to ask the minister how often the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet meets.

**Mr. Rondeau:** We meet every second month.

**Mrs. Driedger:** How long do the meetings go?

**Mr. Rondeau:** They vary greatly in size because we have strategic planning sessions that are longer. Our normal meeting would be about two hours, but they vary greatly in length because you will have a strategic planning session that might take a lot longer than that.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Does the Minister of Healthy Living actually chair that meeting himself?

**Mr. Rondeau:** Yes, I do.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I note that there is also a separate section of Healthy Child deputy ministers. Do they meet along with Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet?

**Mr. Rondeau:** They meet on a regular basis, but they also meet together with us at times. It is a combination of both. In a strategic planning session, of course, they would be there with the deputies. They also have their own regular meetings though.

**Mrs. Driedger:** The Estimates show that there are 22 FTEs, and I would like to ask the minister if this is the full staff complement of Healthy Child.

**Mr. Rondeau:** It is the staff complement, however at times we will have contract positions for research projects or specific contracts for short-term contracts that we allot.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister give any ballpark in terms of how many separate contractors would be hired throughout a year?

**Mr. Rondeau:** We would have, it depends on the year, approximately half a dozen people. But, say if there is a special research project or if we are working on specific initiatives, that number may go up. If we are not working on it, it goes down. But it is approximately half a dozen people on short-term contracts, so it depends. There are deliverables that are established and specific things that people do.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate how many people would be on contract right now and in what particular roles?

**Mr. Rondeau:** Before I do that, I would like to introduce Debra Woodgate, who is the Deputy Minister of Family Services and Housing. She also chairs the deputy ministers' committee for the Healthy Child Initiative, and she reports to me in that capacity.

I am sorry, can you repeat the other question.

\*(10:20)

**Mrs. Driedger:** I was asking the minister how many people he would be contracting with right now, in what particular areas, how long those contracts might be, and if there is a possible price tag attached to each of those.

**Mr. Rondeau:** We can provide that later to you in writing, or we can figure it now which would take a while. So why do we not just provide that in writing to you early next week, or today if we can.

**Mrs. Driedger:** That would be acceptable. Certainly, at the beginning of the week would be fine.

I note that there is one vacancy showing on the office org chart, and I would like to ask the minister if that position is actually vacant right now.

**Mr. Rondeau:** The position is currently vacant, but the WRHA is currently providing support for that role.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister just put a little bit more detail around that. It is a vacant position in BabyFirst for a program and policy consultant. Would the WRHA have a person then that is doing that job and would the WRHA be covering that cost through their own budget?

**Mr. Rondeau:** The BabyFirst is delivered through the WRHA and the WRHA is currently getting a grant to support the administration of this. I understand that that person is now working with the Healthy Child department.

**Mrs. Driedger:** The minister indicated there was a person involved through the WRHA working on that. Would he have a name for that person?

**Mr. Rondeau:** The name of the person responsible for that program through the WRHA is Darlene Girard.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister just clarify whether that person then is being paid out of the WRHA budget?

**Mr. Rondeau:** In the previous year the WRHA did not expend their entire money for the BabyFirst program and they are using those funds to cover that position.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate then why it is showing as a vacant position on his office org chart?

**Mr. Rondeau:** The staff year is still in that department, and so we did not want to eliminate the staff year. Their function is still being done by the WRHA. The program is still being co-ordinated and administered through the regions and in the org chart it notes that the position is right now vacant but full-time, the FT is still in the org chart should it go back to the department.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate when he expects that position to go back to the department as he has indicated it possibly might?

**Mr. Rondeau:** We have this arrangement that is working well with the existing staff for this year. We expect to look at it within the year to see whether this program will be in the Healthy Child department or whether it will remain as is with the WRHA.

**Mrs. Driedger:** So can the minister just confirm then, is it the WRHA then that is covering that person's salary?

**Mr. Rondeau:** Yes, it is currently through money that was supplied through Healthy Child Manitoba.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate, because there are a number of programs, Healthy Baby, the BabyFirst, Early Start, FAS, how many of those programs or positions here within his office org chart are also funded by the WRHA?

**Mr. Rondeau:** All the other programs are funded through the Healthy Child Manitoba.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister confirm that all of the positions then on his office org chart, basically the rest of the 22 FTEs, those are all funded then by Healthy Child?

**Mr. Rondeau:** Yes they are.

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** I am just trying to understand this a little more clearly. The salary dollars then for the program and policy consultant for BabyFirst are not in the salary line then of Healthy Child Manitoba?

**Mr. Rondeau:** What happens is we pay the salary to WRHA. The salary is budgeted within Healthy Child Manitoba and the WRHA is filling that administrative role through Darlene Girard.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Thanks, Mr. Chair, but I thought I heard the minister say a little earlier—and I guess we will have to wait for Hansard to come out—that the salary dollars for Darlene Girard were being paid out of the funding for the BabyFirst program, the funding that was allocated to BabyFirst. So, then, I think we have heard two different explanations from the minister.

**Mr. Rondeau:** As I said, the funding is provided through the Healthy Child department. The funding is provided through BabyFirst. There is a separate agreement under the BabyFirst program to fund the salary with WRHA to deliver the service. The dollars are provided in the Healthy Child budget. They are under the BabyFirst program. Darlene Girard has administered the BabyFirst program since its inception. There has been no change here.

It is like a secondment from the WRHA where the funding from the dollars, the funding dollars come from the salary component of the Budget and are flowed to the WRHA to administer this program. It is all located within the BabyFirst and the Healthy Child budget.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Okay, I guess, then, that leads to the question on why that position for BabyFirst is shown vacant on the org chart?

\* (10:30)

**Mr. Rondeau:** Because she is not a civil servant working directly for the Province. It is sort of like a secondment-type arrangement where she continues her employment as per before this program with the WRHA. She has been administering the program since its inception and she does an admirable job. The difference would be that she was previously an employee of the WRHA, and it is more like a secondment arrangement.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Thanks, Mr. Chair, but if she was previously an employee of the WRHA, what is she now?

**Mr. Rondeau:** Previous to this, she has always been an employee of the WRHA. She wanted to continue that arrangement. She does an excellent job, so this facilitates that process.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Okay, thanks, Mr. Chair. Has the vacancy management directive that has been given by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) impacted in any way on the Healthy Child office?

**Mr. Rondeau:** There are no vacancies in the branch. The branch is staffed, it is staffed as it has been previously. Like I said in earlier questions, Darlene Girard has had the management of this program since its inception. She has stayed in the WRHA. No employment positions have changed.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Mr. Chairman, I will just comment then. I mean if there is a person doing the job in a position, whether it is in the WRHA and we are paying the salary dollars, I am not sure that this org chart is truly reflective of the situation in Healthy Child. So maybe the minister can try to explain that to me.

There is actually a person doing the job. I know that we had some discussion around the org chart in

the Department of Health. People that were seconded from the regional health authority working in the Department of Health were shown as contract salaries in their Estimates. So why the difference here?

**Mr. Rondeau:** We did not show it because the person is not a direct civil servant. I guess we could show it in the future. The position, as we identified, is being contracted out to the WRHA. What we have shown here is the civil servants who are working directly for the department in the Healthy Child department.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Mr. Chair, I would hope that the minister might recommend then the org chart truly reflect next year what the situation is. I do not see, and maybe the minister can find for me, he indicated there were several people on contracts for different projects and I do not see in the Estimates any place where there are contract dollars.

**Mr. Rondeau:** They are through program funds or financial assistance lines, so if a person was working on a specific project, it would be part of that specific project that the person has got the contract for or is doing the research for.

**Mrs. Driedger:** The minister said that there was basically no vacancy management policy within the department. Is there any intent to reduce any of the jobs in the department because of the commitment to decrease the civil service by 400 people?

**Mr. Rondeau:** We followed the vacancy management process of the Government, but when vacancies come up, they are evaluated to see whether they fit within the program. There is not vacancy management initiative because people have remained in their jobs.

I believe they do that because they are happy with their jobs, they see the progress of this important department and their valued by this Government in their important work. So, there has not been a lot of movement in this department. People are staying in their jobs, and I hope that they are happy and continue to do great work.

**Mrs. Driedger:** So can the minister confirm, then, that there will be no vacancies established in his department because of the Government's commitment to decrease the civil service by 400?



**Mr. Rondeau:** I cannot confirm that anyone will leave their job or stay in their job. This is something that people stay in their jobs because they are happy in their jobs. I cannot predict whether people are going to leave their positions. If they do not leave their positions, we are not about to force a person to leave their position. They are doing a good job, we are supportive.

I think it is very nice to say that we have 22 people who are doing good work, they are pleased with their jobs, they are happy with their jobs, and the Government is supporting their good work that they do on behalf of kids and families, and young people in our province.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** So, with that answer, is the minister indicating, and I think he said there were 22 employees, it looks like on the org chart there are 26, but there are actually 26 individuals that are working in the Healthy Child office. Maybe the minister could explain what the vacancy management policy is, then, what it means? I mean, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) indicated clearly that by the end of this fiscal year there would be 400 less positions in the civil service as a result of decreasing the number of FTEs, I would believe. So what is the minister telling us? Is he telling us that the Healthy Child office will not be impacted in any way by the announcement that the Minister of Finance made in his Budget?

\*(10:40)

**Mr. Rondeau:** What we will be doing is, the Government examines all vacancies to see whether we can hold it vacant or not. The Government has said that the departments will review any vacancy. We may have some in the future but we currently do not have and we have not for some time. We will review the spaces if they become vacant. As we are not anticipating any vacancy but, as per government directives, what we will do is look at all the positions, see if any become vacant. If they become vacant what will happen is the departments will look at it to see how long they can be vacant or whether they have to be filled very quickly, and we will follow that process.

I think it is very fiscally responsible if a person leaves to make sure that the person's job is necessary, make sure that the job cannot be modified in any way or delivered in any better way. I think it is

fiscally prudent to make sure that we always review the employment and what the positions are when they become vacant. It is important not to fire people when they are in their position. In no way have we expressed an interest to fire current employees. We appreciate our employees, the hard work that they are doing in this behalf. We think they are doing an excellent job. Not only do we think that we are doing an excellent job, I think it is very good that we have actually invested in excess of \$50 million in kids, in families in Manitoba.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I note on the office org chart that there is a person there by the name of Robert Santos. Can the minister indicate if Mr. Santos is any relation to MLA Conrad Santos?

**Mr. Rondeau:** I understand that it is Conrad's son. I also understand that Mr. Santos has a—

**Mr. Chairperson:** We cannot refer to members by name. Refer to him by constituency or portfolio. Thank you.

**Mr. Rondeau:** I understand it is the member from Wellington's son. I also understand from speaking to other ministers that Rob Santos has acquired a wonderful reputation as a researcher in Early Childhood and also has obtained a wonderful reputation as far as getting good evaluation, understanding the whole concepts and so he actually has a national reputation as far as his excellent work.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister tell me if this position for senior policy and research adviser is a brand-new position or how long has that position been in existence?

**Mr. Rondeau:** I understand that Mr. Santos was previously employed by the previous government in the Children and Youth Secretariat. He has been able to move up in the unit as he has progressed as far as his skills, as far as an employee in research. Within the last few months he has been able to get to the senior policy and research adviser role. He continues to exemplify the role of a good civil servant providing good advice, good research and solid work in the area of Early Childhood.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate if he has a direct appointment into this particular role?

**Mr. Rondeau:** I understand that the previous government hired him as a student. He had been working as a term contract for two years, and as per the civil service collective agreement, after two years as a term, he was appointed a full-time civil servant.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate when that was?

**Mr. Rondeau:** If memory serves me correctly, about a year ago. The appointment to the civil service was approximately about a year ago; maybe two.

**Mrs. Driedger:** The minister indicated that he was on contract for two years and then it was under our government that he was in a term position, a contract term position.

Can the minister then explain, after that two-year period and then prior to what he is now indicating is a direct appointment, what happened to those interim years?

**Mr. Rondeau:** As I understand, if memory serves me correctly, he was employed as a contract as a student for CYS under the former government.

In spring '01 he was given a term appointment that lasted about two years and then he was converted under the collective agreement provisions in the spring '03, and now it is spring '04. Well, looking at the snow you would not know it, but it is spring '04 now, which is approximately a year later.

It is important to note that Rob has provided good service and excellent work. He was at school. So, when he was appointed—employed—by the former government he was still at school working on his Master's and he has proceeded to do that when he was on contract under the former government. He was still at school taking his Master's and he is continuing to go to school and proceed through his PhD.

*Mr. Bidhu Jha, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** I think we have heard what a great employee Robert Santos is and I have no reason to argue that. I guess the question becomes, can the minister just tell us—he was on a contract position. When did he have that contract position with the former administration?

\* (10:50)

**Mr. Rondeau:** I can get the details to you. I was not minister at the time in the former government. What happened was, I was appointed by this Government as minister, not the previous government. So what happened was, I do not know the details. I can try to get that for you, as to how the previous government, your government that you served as minister, started the employment on contract as a student for Rob Santos.

What I can tell you is he was working as a term employee here throughout the first term of our Government. After two years as a term, he was converted under the collective agreement as per the collective agreement; he was converted as a permanent employee. That is what happened under our Government.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** So, in fact, when did Mr. Santos begin to occupy an FTE in this office? Was he moved from a contract position to a position within the office and was that done through a competitive process?

**Mr. Rondeau:** We can get the exact date to you. Again, I do not have the exact date at my fingertips. I can get the date to you in writing or verbally, whichever is more appropriate for you, shortly.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister also include with that information a copy of his job description?

**Mr. Rondeau:** Yes I can.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate what Mr. Santos' salary is currently?

**Mr. Rondeau:** We can provide that as well with the package. So we will give you, from what I understand, his contract date, his job description and his salary. And the date of appointment.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I thank the minister for that undertaking. I would like to now talk about some of the programs within Healthy Child. I will start with Healthy Baby.

Can the minister indicate how much money is budgeted for Healthy Baby?

**Mr. Rondeau:** In the Healthy Baby, the 2004-2005 expenditure Estimates are \$2,196,600. The Community Support Program grants are \$2,187.6

million. The financial assistance costs for program support costs are \$696,200. As far as the Prenatal Benefit, there is a tiny decrease. As far as the Community Support Programs, it is a 1.9% increase.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate whether, last year for instance, whether or not the amount budgeted for Prenatal Benefit was actually all expended?

**Mr. Rondeau:** It was very close to being all expended, very, very close to budget. I do not know if it is right to the dollar amount but it was very, very close to being all expended, because a lot of these programs: the postnatal wellness; the nutrition outreach program; the resources to women and new parents, they are very extensive programs. So it was close to being totally expended.

Again, I do not know if it is right to the dollar but it was very close.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate how many moms would be getting the Manitoba Prenatal Benefit and the average age of the moms?

**Mr. Rondeau:** The number approved was 4379. The average age was 24. To tell you the approved applicants by health region: Assiniboia North was 121; Assiniboia South was 66; Brandon was 232; Burntwood was 487; Central was 420; Churchill was 1; Interlake was 240; NOR-MAN was 171; North Eastman was 171; Parkland was 209; South Eastman was 167; Winnipeg was 2094.

So it is spread quite well throughout the entire province.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister tell us how moms are monitored? Are they monitored on a monthly basis to see if they are doing all right? Do they have counselling that is attached to that, or some kind of a similar support? Or is just a cheque given?

**Mr. Rondeau:** In order to qualify for this benefit, they have to go to a medical professional and actually be talking to a medical professional before they qualify for the cheques. The cheques are given out monthly and there are inserts on healthy pregnancy issues, et cetera. They are encourage to attend the support programs offered through their community, through WRHAs, et cetera. They are

encouraged to attend through lots of different communication methods.

*Mr. Chairperson in the Chair*

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister tell us how they qualify?

**Mr. Rondeau:** They have to be certified by being pregnant, that is, through the medical thing, and then it is an income base.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Other than that, there is really no other criteria upon which they qualify. It is just they are pregnant and income-based?

**Mr. Rondeau:** The way they do it is on a sliding scale, based on net family income. The net family income, examples: If they make \$18,000 or less, a monthly prenatal benefit would be \$81.41; if they made \$24,000, it would be \$63.50; if they made \$28,000, it would be \$31.72; if they made \$30,000, it would be \$15.88; and if they made \$31,999, they would make \$10.

So it is a sliding scale and basically what it is, we are trying to get people to understand the importance of nutrition, health and all this to make sure that the babies are born a healthy birth weight, et cetera.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister explain how he can actually get them to understand what he is talking about and the benefits of good eating, if there is no monthly follow-up or if there is not an evaluation process?

**Mr. Rondeau:** The Healthy Baby Community Support Programs, what we try to do is link these individuals through the initial contact with the Healthy Baby program. It links to education, interpersonal supports, personal supports, information, et cetera, and it gets people to understand the supports that are currently out there for a healthy pregnancy.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate what concrete analyses have been done to see if there are actual benefits to this program?

**Mr. Rondeau:** There is an evaluation that is currently going on to discuss the supplement and other things that we are doing. There are some

challenges through FIPPA, but we are working through Manitoba Centre for Healthy Policy, different organizations, to see how we can get concrete answers to that.

We do have anecdotal evidence by numbers of health care providers who we trust and understand their professional opinion. What we have heard is that these programs are doing a number of things, one, making sure mothers understand FAS, understand the effects of tobacco, understand the importance of nutrition, et cetera.

So what we are trying to do, anecdotally we hear wonderful things about proper birth weights, et cetera; now what we are doing is we are working with researchers to evaluate these programs to make sure that they are having, not only the anecdotal evidence, but the true research evidence.

\* (11:00)

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate if there is actual research going on right now and can he table those research criteria?

**Mr. Rondeau:** There is data being collected, but it has not been researched and processed as yet.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister explain what data is being collected and by whom?

**Mr. Rondeau:** What we are doing is we are collecting birth weights, as it has always been collected, and the challenge becomes trying to link the birth weight to the people who are actually receiving the benefit to make sure that there is a direct correlation to a healthy birth rate.

**Mrs. Driedger:** The minister has indicated, what, \$5 to \$6 million in this particular budget? Is there no other evaluation mechanism other than just a tracking of birth weights?

**Mr. Rondeau:** No, I am not saying that. I said that it was one example of it. There are other things that we are trying to gather; other data we are gathering.

In the case of the prenatal supplement it is \$2.196 million. The other \$2.187 million is the Community Support Program grants. It is \$2.2 million, approximately. What we are doing is we are finding out, not only anecdotally, I know the member

opposite often has lots of things that are not research-based, we are trying to do it so that we know that this having a very detailed, research-based process. What we are going to do is, we are working with a number of organizations. We are talking with the consultation with Healthy Baby communities. We are talking about health care providers. We are working with Manitoba Centre for Health Policy to use administered health data, to assist in evaluating the prenatal benefit. We are linking the prenatal benefit to health data at MCHP to make sure that the analysis is done. We know from health care providers, from nurses, from doctors, from people who are working with children, that this program is having a very positive impact. What we want to do is quantify the impact and that is why we are undertaking the data collection and research now.

**Mrs. Driedger:** The minister has not indicated, other than birth weights, what data is actually being collected.

**Mr. Rondeau:** Mr. Chairperson, I gave the honourable member one example. Birth weight would be a simple concrete example. We also have other ones, like the utilization of the medical system. The long-term child health records. We eventually might be able to link it to the early development instrument. It is a complete package to see how we can have positive impact on children's health. I think it is interesting that this is a program that is supported and had wonderful reviews from multiple people, from Dr. Fraser Mustard, from people who are experts in the field, who know that this is making an impact.

I find it passing strange that the member opposite does not support something as important as providing legitimate support to young mothers to ensure that they have proper nutrition and support for their young families. I find it surprising that the member opposite does not believe in the community support of health care professionals. I find it passing strange that the member is not supporting young mothers having appropriate nutrition and giving them the proper information on FAS, tobacco strategies, et cetera, to ensure that they are not smoking and not drinking during pregnancy and so that they have the information. I think it is important to have this benefit. I think it is important to make sure that the medical community is linked to the supports that are out there with the young mothers. I think it will actually have a huge impact, and I have

faith that it will have an impact on the health of ongoing generations.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I do not really need any condescending response from this minister who is sitting there and cannot tell us in any concrete way how this program is actually helping moms and babies. His response is absolutely ludicrous because he cannot even put on here how any of his linkages or all these wonderful reviews out there are actually making a difference.

Can the minister tell me right now whether they have actually followed the birth weights of the babies of those 4379 moms that have been given this benefit?

**Mr. Rondeau:** The birth weights have been recorded. The program has been in existence for approximately two years. We have been collecting the data on the children and the families that are in the program for the last two years.

The Manitoba Centre is presently linking the health records of the families involved in the program to their ongoing health records and, as the member should know as a nurse, what you want to do is get a number of people so that you have a record, a long-term statistical record, to see the differences. I think we have to develop not just two years of data but a few years of data to see the concrete results statistically of how this impact goes on.

As I mentioned to the member previously, we do have anecdotal reports from nurses, from practitioners, that this is having an impact. It has an impact on the amount of people who are smoking, the amount of people who are drinking, which can create FAS.

We have a number of anecdotal reports on how this affects the proper birth weight of children, but the research has to show not just in one year but over a couple of years how this directly affects the positive health of children. We have anecdotal records; we want the concrete evidence as to how much this affects the positive incomes of health of children.

\* (11:10)

**Mrs. Driedger:** I would just point out to the minister that anecdotal information is not adequate to evaluate

a \$2.2-million budget in and of itself. You need much, much more than that to say that there is a benefit, a value to the moms and babies who are receiving this kind of support. Can the minister tell me if PHIA actually allows him to collect birth weights on those babies whose moms receive this benefit?

**Mr. Rondeau:** I would like to remind the member opposite that this is two years of results. The program is two years old. It does take a little bit of time to get the data to prove the effectiveness of the program and we are doing that.

One of our challenges in the data is that under PHIA we have to use anonymous data collections, that we can use the Manitoba Centre, which can link the names and the individuals anonymously and then get the long-term results that we would expect.

**Mrs. Driedger:** The minister is indicating that the program has been existence for two years, that there are some results. Can he share those results with us in a written document next week?

**Mr. Rondeau:** There is data now. The results are not analyzed as yet as I mentioned earlier to the member. We are analyzing the data. We are collecting the data now. The data is being collected now, there is raw data. There is not the results of this information. We are analyzing the data to get the results. Once we do have long-term results, we can provide that to the member.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate when that will be?

**Mr. Rondeau:** We do not have a concrete date as yet for when the report is going to come out. I am letting the experts work through this to ensure that they have proper time to analyze, to understand the data, to amass the data and then have appropriate professional analysis of what is going on in the program.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate who those experts are that are analyzing the data?

**Mr. Rondeau:** The evaluation team, which is comprised of Rob Santos, is working with Manitoba Centre for Health Policy, Manitoba Health and the federal government on how to amass the information

and how to work through it and present the evaluation results.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Is there an initial document that has set out this research proposal?

**Mr. Rondeau:** Yes, there is an evaluation framework document.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Would the minister be willing to table that next week or provide me a copy of that next week?

**Mr. Rondeau:** Yes, we would be able to provide that next week sometime.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I thank the minister for that undertaking. I would like to spend some time now talking about Healthy Schools and ask the minister if this is the Nurses in Schools program. Is this what it has evolved to, this title of Healthy Schools?

**Mr. Rondeau:** Yes, it is sort of the ongoing evolution of that program.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate how many nurses have been hired and where they have been placed?

**Mr. Rondeau:** I would like to inform the member that the Healthy Schools initiative is not about just putting nurses in every school. It is much more complex than that. It is a program of having schools become healthy which is not just nurses in schools. It is more complex than that issue.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I fully appreciate that. I mean, the documents the minister has talk about a comprehensive school health initiative, and I do appreciate that it is comprehensive but this is an evolution of the Nurses in Schools program which we were committed to a number of years ago. All I am asking the minister is how many nurses have they since placed in the schools and where?

**Mr. Rondeau:** From what I understand, none of the schools are saying that the answer to Healthy Schools is just to put nurses in schools. I understand that the RHAs are working with schools and school divisions, they are developing plans.

One of the examples of Healthy Schools might be the \$100 grant we gave for increasing activity in

schools. As the member knows, increasing activity actually helps with children's development and so we provided a grant to schools that chose to participate in the program. What we did was provided a small grant, and then kids became more active.

We did the same thing for nutrition previously where what we did was provide a smaller grant to each school. The schools helped focus on good nutritional and eating habits and things like that. So it is not just nurses in schools, it is increasing activity, proper nutrition. The member might know that Frontier School Division adopted a nutritional policy where they threw a lot of the junk food and soft drinks out of schools.

So it is not just nurses in schools, the components or framework are promoting community-based activities that are consistent with the Manitoba Healthy Schools model, promoting province-wide resources, promoting targeted provincial activities in response to issues affecting the health and wellness of the school community.

So it is not just the nurses in the schools. It is RHAs, community resources, schools working together to become healthier.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Have there been any nurses hired and placed in schools?

**Mr. Rondeau:** This program would not directly hire or employ any nurse to go directly into the schools. What it is, it is a co-operative effort between the RHAs, who do employ nurses, and other stakeholders to make the school healthier. It is not just hiring a nurse and putting the nurse in the school. It might be utilization of existing nurses that work in the RHAs. It might be numbers of different programs but it is not just hiring a nurse and putting in the school. It might be utilizing existing resources in the RHA and sharing them or working together. We believe in co-operation.

**Mrs. Driedger:** The minister did indicate that this was an evolutionary program, this Healthy Schools evolved from the Nurses in Schools program where there was a commitment by this Government to put nurses in schools. The minister is definitely skating around this answer and I am asking him now. A commitment had been made to put nurses in schools. This program has evolved out of that commitment and the minister is refusing to answer the question. I

will ask him one more time. How many nurses have they placed, based on the commitment they made to do so?

\* (11:20)

**Mr. Rondeau:** Putting nurses in schools does not necessarily mean that you are going to directly employ specific nurses to go specifically into schools. What it might mean is the RHAs might share the expertise of nurses in the field to go on a part-time basis or do something like that. They might have nurse educators that go into the schools. They might have activity co-ordinators or nutritionists or dietitians. It is not for us to say that we want to hire a nurse and that will solve the problem. You might want to get dietitians, activity specialists, nutritionists. A lot of health care professionals might work well in a school to increase the long-term health of kids and hence our whole future generation.

What they are doing in this program is that all the community partners are working together, including RHAs, including school divisions, including community partners to increase the health of the children in their schools. I do not think it is necessarily appropriate for us to hire and develop the plan for each school. This is a community co-operative development where people are working together to improve the health and we are not mandating them not to hire specific nurses in specific schools.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** I asked the minister the other day about the incidence of fetal alcohol syndrome and the data that has been collected and I have not received that information. I wonder if he has that available or could make that available?

**Mr. Rondeau:** From what I understand, the incidence of FAS is very difficult to obtain and so we are working to collect that. It is tough to sort of say, okay what are your instances of FAS. We are endeavouring to collect it and we will provide it to the member. We did not have it at our fingertips, nor do we at this moment.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I would ask the minister, in view of increasing evidence that breast milk and breast-feeding are critical not only in terms of short-term health but is very important in terms of long-term health and the incidence of cardiovascular disease,

that breast-feeding can significantly decrease the incidence of atherosclerosis later in life, what the minister is doing in terms of promoting breast-feeding and in terms of measuring changes in breast-feeding patterns in Manitoba?

**Mr. Rondeau:** Mr. Chairperson, the breast-feeding is a very important issue and I am glad the member brought it up. It is promoted very heavily in the 85 Healthy Baby sites across the province. It is also included in the inserts for the benefit for the supplement that we had talked about earlier.

We had proclaimed Breast-feeding Week. Also, the RHAs and Manitoba Health have it as major issue as far as they are trying to promote it in the hospitals when the mothers are having their baby. They are trying to promote it through midwives, et cetera, and through the Baby Friendly program across the country they are promoting breast-feeding. I would also like to invite the member up to my office where there are a number of posters promoting breast-feeding. I think it is an important issue, especially for young families. Thank you.

**Mr. Gerrard:** The second part of my question was, what measurements are being made to look at outcomes because, clearly, we have had numerous examples of government advertising campaigns and efforts which have spent lots of money but have not made any difference. So can you tell us whether, in fact, all of this is having any impact or whether you need to change directions and do something different?

**Mr. Rondeau:** Through the Healthy Baby program, we have been collecting the data for the last two years. We just started collecting the data. We are collecting data on the number of women who breast-feed, the length of breast-feeding, et cetera and then, over time, it will be on the health outcomes. So we are starting to collect that data. It does take a little bit of time to ensure that we have the data to see the trends. We are working very hard to increase the trend, to make sure more mothers are breast-feeding. One of the things we found is that by delivering the message, not only in one way, but multiply, we might get more people to breast-feed.

**Mr. Gerrard:** My time is up, but I would ask if the minister could send me copies of the data which has been collected to date.

**Mr. Rondeau:** I can provide you the framework agreement on collection of data. When the data is finally amassed and some sort of report goes out, we can provide the member that when it is developed.

**Mrs. Driedger:** In a document called "Healthy Schools: A Conceptual Framework," there is reference to a resource binder that has been developed, based on the conceptual framework for Healthy Schools in Manitoba, and it indicated that that binder would be available later in 2003. I wonder if I could ask the minister for a copy of that resource binder.

**Mr. Rondeau:** From what I understand, there are materials developed and it is a work in progress, so things are added to it, but we can provide you some of the materials that were collected so far. The good part is that this is a program that we do not mind adding good practice or things that are happening in the future, so there are updates periodically.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I note that in this document that I am looking at, it does indicate that it is a work in progress and information will be added to it. Certainly I have no argument with that. So I would appreciate a copy of that resource binder from the minister.

Can the minister indicate what the budget is for Healthy Schools?

\* (11:30)

**Mr. Rondeau:** We are working in collaboration with school divisions, RHAs, different partners, to work through this initiative. One of the good parts about this initiative is it is spread among multiple partners. Let us say that an RHA is providing a nurse part-time to provide education on nutrition or activity. The RHA is expected to be an active partner and provide that service to the school division without actually having money in this line. So, in other words, the RHA being an active partner will provide that service to the school divisions. It is meant to be a co-operative effort.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Well, we are looking today at a budget for \$22.3 million here. I would assume out of that \$22 million, there is an allocated amount for Healthy Schools. Could the minister tell us what that is?

**Mr. Rondeau:** I would like to inform the member of a very good news announcement where we are going

to be giving the school divisions \$5,000 each in the coming next little while to promote Healthy Schools. So the \$5,000 each comes to a total of approximately \$200,000.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Is the minister telling us that the total budget for Healthy Schools then is \$200,000?

**Mr. Rondeau:** What I will confirm is the Healthy Schools is a co-operative effort between multiple partners. So an example is the resource development might be in one small part of the Budget, you have another where the school divisions are expected to contribute resources and expertise. So they might do phys ed time, they might do extra-curricular time. The RHAs are expected to contribute staff and resources to make sure that Healthy Schools participate. It is not all in one little area of the Budget.

The member had some difficulty understanding how different departments could co-operate on an initiative and part of the whole Healthy Living ministry was to break down the silos, so we would not put Healthy Living in just a small component. What it would be is a cross-departmental, so that some of the expertise and expenditure would be in Education, some of it would be in Health, some of it would be in different departments.

So I have no difficulty understanding how a nurse who is paid by a regional health authority could go in and do courses or classes in schools. In fact, previously in my former employment as a school teacher, I often had public health nurses who would come and talk about an important initiative with my classroom and I never paid the nurse out of my education budget. She did that as part of her work as a public health nurse and an educator.

So, the Healthy Schools, the budget is not in one small area. What it is is every different department, every different partner is expected to contribute to that program. We are not hiring specific nurses to work in a school. We are working in co-operation with multiple partners to improve the health care outcomes and the health of students.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister tell us what the Healthy Baby budget is this year and what was expended last year?

**Mr. Rondeau:** As I understand it, last year is still being finalized because the final details are not



absolutely concrete. Last year the adjusted vote was \$2,264,300 for the Prenatal Benefit, for the grants it was \$2,147,300 and the financial assistance program support costs was \$696,200, the same as this year.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Could the minister just give the total amount of that adjusted vote for Healthy Baby for last year?

**Mr. Rondeau:** For all components it was \$5,107,800. That was the adjusted vote.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Could the minister indicate what is budgeted for this year?

**Mr. Rondeau:** Mr. Chair, \$5,080,400.

**Mrs. Driedger:** The next program is BabyFirst and Early Start. I do not know if he has gotten those separated out or if it is integrated into one program, in this little booklet I am looking at it is together. I would ask him what was the adjusted vote for BabyFirst and Early Start last year and then what the budget is for this year?

**Mr. Rondeau:** Would it be okay to just do BabyFirst first and then do Early Start?

**Mrs. Driedger:** Sure.

**Mr. Rondeau:** BabyFirst, this year's expenditure estimates would be \$6,712,700 plus \$270,800 for the financial assistance. That compares to last year's where there was 5,834,500 and the same \$270,800 for financial assistance.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Could the minister just give one total amount?

**Mr. Rondeau:** Last year's total was \$6,105,300. This year's total was \$6,983,500. So that was an increase of \$878,200 and I do not know the percentage increase off by hand, yes, about an \$800,000 increase.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Could the minister indicate the adjusted vote for Early Start and the budget for this year, again a total figure?

\* (11:40)

**Mr. Rondeau:** The 2003-2004 adjusted vote was \$1,749,400. This year's estimate is \$2,224,400, which is an increase of about half a million dollars,

\$501,400 to help Bonnie or sorry, to help the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson).

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can we have the figures for Parent-Child Centered Approach?

**Mr. Rondeau:** These figures will include the coalitions plus the direct grants to that program, Parent-Child Centres. Last year's adjusted vote for 2003-2004 is \$3,025,000. This year it looks like it is \$3,055,000 which is a \$30,000 increase, to help the member do her math.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can we go through those same figures for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome programming?

**Mr. Rondeau:** I can inform the honourable member that there are other pockets of money that do things in prevention of FAS in other budgets, but I can tell you in the same budget period for the Healthy Child, the 2003-2004 adjusted vote was \$889,400. This year's was \$899,400 for a \$10,000 increase to help the Member for River East. The interesting part about STOP FAS and that, though there are a lot of different organizations that are into that. You also have some money through the Manitoba Liquor Commission. You have money from different organizations and so that is not just the total budget for STOP FAS in the province.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Now I note on one of the pages in this little booklet, it talks about healthy adolescent development. Is there a program in this particular area that has a budget line?

**Mr. Rondeau:** There is an interdepartmental committee that is working on this initiative. There are some things that we are doing through Healthy Child, for example, some community-based grants to organizations that are doing great work. An example is Teen Talk which the honourable members are sure of, the mentoring programs, Think Again. There are a lot of different community agencies that are doing wonderful work in supporting teens. So again, it is not where the Budget is in one specific spot, it is spread around a number of different organizations. Education is doing it. Health is doing it. Lots of groups are doing it.

I can tell you that in the Healthy Child we have good grants to a number of groups that are providing good services. Last year's adjusted vote was \$668,200, whereas this year's budget is \$720,800 for

an increase of about—that does not look right. I will let the Member for River East do the number.

**An Honourable Member:** Could the minister just repeat them. I just did not get them.

**Mr. Rondeau:** Okay, I will do that again \$668,200 to \$720,800, so about a 40 to 50-some-odd-thousand-dollar increase. Again what this is is a whole series of smaller grants to a number of community agencies that are working with youth. So it is not just one big chunk of money and, again, it is not restricted just to Healthy Child.

**Mrs. Driedger:** We go through these same kinds of numbers for the adjusted vote and the current Estimates for Healthy Schools.

**Mr. Rondeau:** I would like to inform the member that the vote last year was \$700.6 thousand. This year there is no line in the Budget for this program because we have decided to approach it a different way. It was a tough budget year, and so what we have decided to do is work through different partners to ensure that the program continues, but trying to deliver it a different way.

So, as I explained to the member before, we are trying to use resources from RHAs, from schools, from community resources to deliver the program. The program will not end but it will be delivered through existing resources and through different partners.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Is the minister then indicating that it is budgeted some place else from within government to carry forward with the Healthy Schools program?

**Mr. Rondeau:** We are going to be using existing resources in existing departments through the different partners in the Healthy Schools program. So RHAs will be expected to continue to partner and work with schools, school divisions will continue to expect to work using some of their resources, and we will work with multiple partners to move the initiative forward.

Again, it is one budget line and one department. We do not want to focus on Healthy Living being one budget item in one small department. What we want to do is focus Healthy Living throughout the Government, throughout the community, throughout multiple agencies.

What we want to do is make sure that all individuals and all organizations understand the importance of Healthy Living, understand the importance of working together to get to a long-term positive Healthy Living message. We will continue to do that in this Government.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Well, I hope the minister realizes that it makes it very difficult to see the transparency and accountability in a program if there is no budget line attached to something. This Government is trying to go out and say they are doing all these wonderful things in Healthy Schools but there is no direct budget line for it. It appears that, from what the minister said, there is no line in the Budget this year for this, so it appears that it has been cut from Healthy Child.

Now, he is saying that the Healthy Schools program will be carried out through various other departments, but I hope he realizes the difficulty because of the lack of transparency and accountability by not having this focussed in any one place and yet, the minister is going to be out there touting this program that seems to be very fuzzy and all over the place.

Now, there have been a couple of news releases by the Government that shows 1.3 million more money put into BabyFirst and Early Start, and about 90,000 for the Turnabout program, so it looks like there is new money just in those two programs of \$1.4 million. Would those numbers be accurate?

**Mr. Rondeau:** In response to the member's first comment, by breaking down the silos between departments, between government silos, what you do is you can actually create some wonderful programs.

An example is Intergovernmental Affairs just had a wonderful announcement on the extension of the Reh-Fit Centre where you have an individual from the community come up with \$3 million, the federal government come up with \$1.2 million, we come up with \$1.2 million, and you have other individuals, smaller contributors come up with money.

By working like that, because we built a Reh-Fit Centre, no it is not the Department of Healthy Living that contributed the \$1.2 million, it was a tripartite agreement. It was through Intergovernmental Affairs.

So the trouble is that if you break it down to silos, there is not one department that looks after Healthy Living. It is Education, it is in Intergovernmental Affairs, it is in Agriculture, it is in Education, so it is across the boundaries.

\* (11:50)

So, it is not the silo approach, it is an integrated approach. Our department, I know the member made fun of the fact that we can work together, we do work together. Our Government is co-operative and we work throughout the silos. So, if you note, the Attorney General (Mr. Mackintosh) was there at the Turnabout program.

Turnabout is an important program to keep kids healthy and out of trouble with the law, and so what we did was we made sure that that is an announcement. There are other announcements. The Reh-Fit Centre, I made that announcement on behalf of the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Mihychuk).

So we are trying very hard to break down the silos to work co-operatively because then to put it bluntly, we get more bang for our bucks. We move it further and everyone gets it. It is not where the Healthy Living Minister will make everybody healthy. It is community groups, all different departments of government, all different organizations working together.

So that becomes very, very important. It is a different way of approach. I think it is really important to know that it does work. We had 4200 hits on our Web site in three days, because people understand. It refers to other departments or organizations that are doing good work. There are great links on it. So that is the way we are going to be doing government and I think it is a good way of doing government. So that is how we will be working it.

You do not have to have all the money in Healthy Living to continue working in partnership with multiple partners to deliver. I know it is harder to say, "Okay, where is the program?" But again, what we want to do is show you that it does work, assure you that it does work—working cooperatively with multiple departments and organizations.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Well, the minister did not answer the question. But I will give him another chance. But he was making reference to silos. So I guess to take his logic one step further, BabyFirst is a silo. Early Start is a silo. The Parent-Child Centres are a silo. FAS funding is a silo. Healthy adolescence is a silo.

But Healthy Schools has now been totally eliminated because we cannot have a silo there because everybody else in government is going to be carrying out that program; which if you follow the logic of what he just said, that is exactly what it infers.

Now I did ask the minister, there are announcements of new spending, an expanded amount of funding to BabyFirst and Early Start for \$1.3 million, \$90,000 for Turnabout and that amounts to \$1.4 million in new money for those programs. I was asking the minister if my analysis of that is correct.

**Mr. Rondeau:** I would first like to say that there is integration between the Healthy Child, Healthy Baby, FAS, Parent-Child Centres, RHAs. We have in this department integrated a lot of those programs. Those people work together with the schools. They have a budget line, and what they were trying to do though is break down the silos. So if you would take the parent-child approach that they get together, the parent-child coalitions work together.

A lot of these same people are at the table. So what we are trying to do is make sure that there is integration of support. We break down the barriers so that people work together, know what each other are doing and rely on each other. That is one of the strengths. In fact, the success of the Turnabout program was very important because what they said was it was a resource to families to get them to work together to understand where the resources and supports were, through the family, to make sure that silos were broken down.

The interesting part is you hear from the families, you hear from the police, you hear from the people in Justice and they say it is working. So exactly what we are trying to do is break down the silos and barriers.

In response to your second question, yes, that is exactly what it is.

**Mrs. Driedger:** So the minister has confirmed that out of those programs there is an additional \$1.4 million added to fund those. But the Budget itself is only showing an \$800,000 increase versus the \$1.4 million increase. So it is obvious just from the budget line itself that cuts were made, and the cuts were obviously made to accommodate these programs.

The minister has confirmed that there was a \$700,000 cut to the Healthy Schools line. So that pretty much does add up as it is. I had been wondering where the cut had been made in order for those numbers to work out but the minister has provided us with that information. It appears that the Healthy Schools program, which is interesting because the document was just put out, this Healthy Schools document was just put out last year after the election, moving towards this Healthy Schools.

I think there has certainly been a lot of fanfare about this particular program and now, all of a sudden, a few months later we see this program disappear. It will be interesting to find out, maybe the minister could tell us.

How much did this whole development of this Healthy Schools framework and everything cost just for them now to eliminate it?

**Mr. Rondeau:** I would like to inform the member there is also a small decrease of 98, no, actually a large decrease of \$98.6 thousand to operating money. Again, we did not stop the Healthy Schools program. What happened is it is a comprehensive model. We have partners at the table. We are moving forward with it. I informed the member that we had given previous grants of \$100 for nutrition, \$100 for activity. We have given that to individual schools. We have plans to move forward in giving grants to school divisions of \$5,000 each, to promote healthy living.

We have been moving forward on it. I think what you have to understand is that, in a comprehensive model, you do not have to have the budget line for the nurse that goes into the school in the school budget or in the Healthy Child budget. That might be in the RHA budget. You might have the nutritionist that goes in, the phys ed teacher that

is focussing directly on activity, et cetera, is not in the Healthy School budget.

I know in Heritage Park School we have a phys ed teacher that is doing a walking program. He has been doing it regularly. It is a great program, and we have hundreds of kids involved, and it is not in the Healthy Child budget. He is being paid out of the school division, and I think that is an important concept to understand. It is a comprehensive model.

\* (12:00)

**Mrs. Driedger:** Well, no matter how the minister is spinning it, they have eliminated \$700,000 for a Healthy School budget. So that is gone. That is clear. It certainly looks, you know, in some instances that what we have here, through what could happen with Healthy Child programs, is an illusion of activity or an illusion that there are all kind of things going on. While it sounds good conceptually on paper, you have to wonder how any number of these programs then could eventually roll out and how transparent and accountable would they all be. Certainly it will bear some close scrutiny over the next year, and that scrutiny will be in place, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Rondeau:** I think that we have some wonderful programs that are going on with Healthy Child. We have good support for parents, real support for parents, real support for children. We are moving forward with FAS prevention programs. We have a prenatal supplement. We have coalitions that work very strongly with individuals and families and with each other. We are moving forward to improving the health outcomes of all Manitobans. I think it is improving the health outcomes of all Manitobans and especially early prevention and intervention programs. Especially programs that provide positive support for families should be applauded by all members, and I know that is what is happening here.

I would like to commend the work of the department. The Healthy Child Manitoba department is very focussed, very hardworking, and I think they are doing a great job. I would like to commend all the people who are working on behalf of Manitoba's children not just in Healthy Child but in parent centres, child centres, education centres. It is a whole raft of people, and I think it is important to note that when you do not work in a silo, when you work across government and across jurisdictions, I think you get far more bang for the buck and you get

better, more progressive outcomes. I think that is what this department does, and I am pleased to head a department that is breaking down the silos and moving ahead on the good health of all Manitobans.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Well just a final comment to the minister. He is making it sound like everything is really good, that all the programs are good, and I am sure there are some that absolutely are and are beneficial, but without a solid evaluation, how does he know? I mean how can he legitimately sit there and say that all of the programs are really working well when he does not have some solid data to back some of those assertions? So I would like to challenge the minister on that and to put evaluations, solid evaluations, solid research so that we can evaluate and measure the outcomes to see if the expenses of, you know, \$22 million is actually benefiting families. I am sure in some instances it is, but we do not know that with all of the programs, and I would challenge the minister to move forward on that. We are prepared now to move forward on a line by line.

**Mr. Rondeau:** We are also committed to the research. We do want to have the research. As I said, we will give you the framework for the research. Yes, we have anecdotal information, but we do want the research basis too.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I understand we have completed debate on Healthy Child Manitoba and will now pass the resolutions. I will read Resolution 34.1 into the record.

Resolution 34.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$22,301,800 for Healthy Child Manitoba for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

*Resolution agreed to.*

Resolution 34.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$13,400 for Healthy Child Manitoba, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

*Resolution agreed to.*

**Mr. Chairperson:** This completes the Estimates for Healthy Child Manitoba.

## SENIORS DIRECTORATE

**Mr. Chairperson (Harry Schellenberg):** The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is for the Seniors Directorate. I understand we will have a short recess.

*The committee recessed at 12:05 p.m.*

*The committee resumed at 12:07 p.m.*

**Mr. Chairperson:** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now be considering the Estimates of the Seniors Directorate.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

**Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister responsible for Seniors):** Yes, I do, Mr. Chairperson. As Minister responsible for Seniors, I am pleased to present the 2004-2005 Budget Estimates for the Manitoba Seniors Directorate.

The needs of seniors are important to this Government. Seniors currently make up over 13 percent of Canada's population and Manitoba has one of the highest numbers of seniors per capita in the country. By the year 2021, estimates indicate one third of Manitoba's population will be age 55 or older. For the first time ever, Manitoba's population will have more people 65 and older than 14 and younger. Last year, we announced our Advancing Age: Promoting Older Manitobans strategy. It is designed to lead government in developing a co-ordinated framework of legislation, public policy and programs to address current emerging and future needs of older Manitobans. This strategy recognizes the importance of consulting with seniors and engaging them in the process.

Last year we provided financial support for key seniors' organizations, Age and Opportunity, Creative Retirement, Manitoba Society of Seniors and la Fédération des aînés franco-manitobains, each with \$20,000. In return, they have provided us with valuable advice regarding a number of issues. They are working to strengthen and enhance their ability to work on behalf of older Manitobans and I look

forward to their continued support and collaboration in this, the second year of the initiative.

We are now in the process of developing a comprehensive inventory of programs and services available to older Manitobans in various government departments. When completed later this year, this inventory will provide valuable insights into the many ways we can currently address the needs of seniors, who will also help us plan for emerging and future needs as our population continues to age.

As we look at the challenges of an aging population, our Government is looking at ways to make the Seniors Directorate more effective in its work across departments, as noted in the November, 2003 Speech from the Throne. We will be enhancing communication and focussing resources on issues that are important to older Manitobans. We are also committed to enhancing access to the government resources and improving the service delivery to seniors and their families.

\*(12:10)

Sharing knowledge and information remains important. The Seniors Directorate maintains an active Web site and produces a number of helpful publications. To ensure a continued and vibrant program of publications, we are seeking new partners within government and the community to assist in our efforts. As well, we have just released the 2004-2005 edition of Manitoba Council on Aging's Manitoba Seniors' Guide. It continues to be a valuable source of information and is used by seniors, caregivers, and professionals across the province. This continues to be a wonderful publication with lots of positive information.

How older adults are perceived and valued is a key factor in the services and opportunities available for Manitobans as they age. One of the short-term strategies of advancing age is to dispel myths and misconceptions of aging through the video, Seniors are Cool, and the resource guide. Using this upbeat video as an interactive tool, Seniors Directorate staff are meeting with health care professionals, older Manitobans and students from elementary schools through to universities. These meetings lead to open discussion about age, culture, gender, lifelong learning and active living. The Seniors Directorate staff is continuing these and other discussions. They are meeting in rural and northern Manitoba and

working with our colleagues in other provinces and territories, as well as with those in the federal government to address a broad range of interests and concerns to older Manitobans.

As Minister responsible for Seniors, I actively seek the views of older Manitobans and organizations that work on their behalf. From the Partners Seeking Solutions group to the St. James Assiniboia Senior Centre, from the Manitoba Association of Multi Purpose Senior Centres to the University of Manitoba's Centre on Aging, I have listened to ideas, issues and concerns.

Addressing elder abuse remains a priority. Our province continues to be a leader in this area with our elder abuse initiative. Community response monitoring teams have been developed, or are being developed, in the Assiniboine, Brandon, Burntwood, Interlake and NOR-MAN, North Eastman, and Parkland regional health authorities. These teams bring together community resources such as finance institutions, police services, regional health and community organizations to share information and resources. Their goal is to respond to issues and provide support at the community and regional level.

We are also recognizing other important areas of senior safety and security through several innovative projects. Manitoba's Seniors Directorate, along with the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba and RCMP has developed a seniors' safety and security badge for Girl Guides. This badge focusses on elder abuse, fraud, scams and addictions. I am pleased to report this program will be expanded throughout the entire province of Manitoba.

Partnerships continue to be a vital component of the work we do. The Seniors Directorate has been a partner with the Manitoba's Consumer Bureau and several government departments in developing a 2004 Protect Yourself consumers' awareness calendar. This calendar provides important safety tips to help prevent consumers from being victimized by frauds and scams. Plans are underway for a 2005 calendar and, again, this was very popular in the seniors community and the people I had a chance to give it to were very pleased at this calendar.

The Seniors Directorate has also worked with Manitoba Justice, the Winnipeg Police Service, and Age and Opportunity in developing the SafetyAid crime protection for older Manitobans program. As

part of the program, the safety team visits seniors' residences in high-crime areas of Winnipeg. They provide security devices and safety audits to increase the security of seniors' homes.

Our Manitoba Council on Aging continues to provide valuable services, advice on issues of concern and need to seniors. In this past year, the council has addressed matters as diverse as property tax, international pharmacy, seniors' housing, lifelong learning, etc. The Council continues to share perspectives with me on current issues as we are now exploring options on how to support an ever-broader consultation process.

Our Government is committed to ensuring our seniors maintain the highest quality of life now and in the future. To meet this goal, the Seniors Directorate will continue to lead government in creating an environment that promotes health, independence and well-being for all Manitoba's seniors. I am pleased with the work that the Seniors Directorate continues to do on behalf of government and all our seniors. I would like to commend their work and their continued work in support of healthy aging of Manitoba's seniors.

**Mr. Chairperson:** We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic, the honourable Member for Southdale, have any opening comments?

**Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale):** I would like to just put a short comment on the record in regard to the Seniors Directorate and the area of Estimates that we are going through right now.

I have had the opportunity, actually, to be the minister responsible for seniors, and I found it very, very satisfying and very, very educational in the fact that I had an opportunity to spend a lot of time with seniors' organizations, not only here in Winnipeg but throughout all of Manitoba. And the one thing that the minister has referred to is the strength and the commitment that we have in our seniors' community and the fact that it is growing. As has been pointed out, we will have one of the highest percentages of seniors in Manitoba, within the next short while, than any other province in Canada. So the efforts that are put forth by government, government of any stripe, towards recognizing the seniors and their

contributions and the problems and the challenges that come to government, because of the situations that are put before us with an aging population is something that is commendable, that the Seniors Directorate has continued since its inception in 1988, when the government of the day then appointed a role for a Cabinet minister to be directly responsible and accountable, in a sense, to the seniors population here in Manitoba.

I know that there are a few other questions that I would like to ask, so with just those short comments, maybe we can into the Estimates.

**Mr. Chairperson:** We thank the critic from the Official Opposition for those remarks.

Would the staff please come forward and would the minister introduce his staff.

**Mr. Rondeau:** I am joined today by Jim Hamilton, who is the Executive Director, and Patti Chiappetta, the Director of Policy Development.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Does the committee now wish to proceed through Estimates in a chronological manner or have a global discussion?

**Mr. Reimer:** Global discussion maybe for all the various departments in the Seniors Directorate.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Do we have agreement to have a global discussion? *[Agreed]*

**Mr. Reimer:** I have a few questions, and I guess when the minister was talking about the donations that were made to various organizations, I noticed in the Grants section of the Estimates that there is an amount there also included. Maybe he can tell me which groups have been allocated, or which groups will be allocated, that money. I believe in the Estimates it is just over \$65,000.

**Mr. Rondeau:** Under the grants there is \$60,500 for Age and Opportunity for the Elder Abuse Services that you are aware of, and MSOS Games is getting \$5,000 under the grants.

**Mr. Reimer:** So this \$60,500 would be going towards the Elder Abuse line. Could the minister give me any indication of the amount of calls that are coming in to the Elder Abuse line?

**Mr. Rondeau:** I will give you the numbers for a historical perspective. On the information line for seniors in 2002-2003 was 3593 and in '03-04 was 3527, so it is very similar. On the Abuse line in 2002-2003, it was 154; on the '03-04, it was 254. There was a considerable increase, but I think that was due to the advertising. We started putting up more posters about it, and I think that really was good because then we got more calls.

**Mr. Reimer:** Is there any general classification of the calls that are coming in on the Elder Abuse line as to what areas most of the concerns are being phoned in on?

**Mr. Rondeau:** The types of calls on the abuse line, the 254 calls were broken down as follows: 45 percent were on financial abuse; 40 percent were on emotional abuse; 5 percent were on neglect; 2 percent were physical; and 2 percent were other. Most of them were on financial or emotional abuse, and then the actual physical were only 2 percent and neglect were 5 percent.

**Mr. Reimer:** Is the Elder Abuse line phone number or pamphlet available in the personal care homes?

**Mr. Rondeau:** The posters and brochures, both, are in personal care homes, hospitals. We have a very wide distribution.

**Mr. Reimer:** Moving on to the Council on Aging, I noticed that it says it is a 15-member council. Are there 15 members on that council at present including the chairperson?

\* (12:20)

**Mr. Rondeau:** Yes, there is.

**Mr. Reimer:** Maybe the member could, if he has the list handy, it could be just read into the Hansard. Just the name and the location. I do not particularly need their address right now.

**Mr. Rondeau:** Norma Drosdowech in Winnipeg; Mme. Lorraine Bonnefoy in Winnipeg; John Gano in Winnipeg; Paul Hagen, Springstein; Claude Hebert, Winnipeg; Kathy Horkoff, Winnipeg; Mme. France Lemaye, St. Boniface; Virginia Maracle, Winnipeg; Rene Toupin, East St. Paul; Bernice Marmel, Winnipeg; Raoul McKay, Winnipeg; Jeanette Niven, Minitonas; Archie Orlikow, Winnipeg; Joseph

Slomiany, Brandon; and Eleanor Spencer, Flin Flon. I can provide you with the list, if you wish.

**Mr. Reimer:** Yes, if the minister could supply the list that would be good. The only concern I would have is I did not hear too many names from the rural area. I believe that in my count there may have been three or four only.

**Mr. Rondeau:** There are four basically from rural and one northern right now.

**Mr. Reimer:** In the flowchart of the organization chart supplied in the Estimates, it has the elder abuse consultant and then three consultants. Would the minister have the individuals' names for those four positions?

**Mr. Rondeau:** The elder abuse consultants just have been changed due to maternity leave, and that is Eileen Mead; she is seconded to the position and what has happened is, that is just filling a mat leave. The other consultants are Karlee Spiers, Helen Forrest and Paulette Desaulniers.

**Mr. Reimer:** With the Council on Aging, has the council been doing any type of meetings outside of Winnipeg and maybe the minister at the same time could give me the frequency of meetings that the council has undertaken, say, for the last year?

**Mr. Rondeau:** Presently, they are meeting four times a year. I am pleased to inform the member that we are planning to increase that to five and have one outside Winnipeg.

**Mr. Reimer:** Have there been any meetings outside of Winnipeg, say, in the last two years?

**Mr. Rondeau:** Not as a full council, but members have attended outside meetings. That is why we are getting a change where we are going to have one meeting outside of Winnipeg this year, and hopefully in the future; a positive change. Ask me one more question.

**Mr. Reimer:** I know that the minister has mentioned the MSOS Games. I know that I have had the opportunity to attend those games, and the participation by a lot of the members within the association and the seniors throughout Manitoba is something that is of a nature that a lot of them enjoy. I have gone to a lot of the events. I can remember



going down to, I believe it was Morris, and I believe it was out in western Manitoba, and I think it moves around to various locations throughout Manitoba. The participation other than the bungee jumping is very, very well-attended. I believe that the MSOS Games—The minister mentioned that there is a donation of \$5,000 through the department.

Last year, I believe, there was also a donation that he mentioned to the Age and Opportunity. Would there be any grants going to, pardon me, I did not mean Age and Opportunity, I meant Creative Retirement I am sorry, for their operations. Maybe also the minister can answer whether there have been any overtures made by the seniors association, various seniors organizations, for amalgamation of sort of a central campus. I know there was talk of a campus type of operation being set up here in Winnipeg and whether there has been any movement on that.

**Mr. Rondeau:** I would like to respond by saying it has been enjoyable to watch the former minister of seniors at a lot of the senior's events. It has been pleasurable. I know it is a great ministry to hold because you are working with very positive, enjoyable people doing wonderful things. I would like to respond by saying that there has been initial work on this central campus but what we are trying to do is, through UDI and REDI, support the seniors groups in multiple ways. I understand that through the Advancing Age, they are going to be getting grants to support their work.

With three minutes left—

**Mr. Reimer:** At this time, we are willing to pass the Estimates.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I understand the debate on Seniors Directorate has been completed, and we will pass the resolutions.

Resolution 24.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$733,100 for Seniors Directorate for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 24.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$8,000 for Seniors Directorate, Costs Related to Capital

Assets, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

**Resolution agreed to.**

This concludes the Estimates for the Seniors Directorate.

The hour being 12:30 p.m. the committee will rise.

**ADVANCED EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

\* (10:00)

**Madam Chairperson (Bonnie Korzeniowski):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Advanced Education and Training.

Does the honourable Minister of Advanced Education and Training have an opening statement?

**Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** Yes, I do, Madam Chair. Would you like me to proceed?

**Madam Chairperson:** Please.

**Ms. McGifford:** I will be brief. I know that the member opposite and I have had a short discussion and we think that in the interests of expediency, we should be brief. So I will endeavour to do that.

The Advanced Education budget for 2004-2005 is \$541.9 million and represents a 2.8 increase over last year. The total capital for universities and colleges is 18,549.5 and includes an increase of 1.8 million for the mould and asbestos remediation at the Thompson campus of KCC and I am sure my colleague opposite knows about that issue. Operating increases to universities and colleges, base operating grants to public universities and colleges have been increased by 2 percent overall, including a 1.8 base adjustment, 465,000 for year 4 of the rural physician resource plan and a special funding adjustment of 200,000 for Red River College.

Universities have received property tax savings of 3.4 million or 1.3 percent, bringing the actual increase for universities to 3.3 percent. Colleges have received an increase of 4.3 million for the college

expansion initiative for a total increase of 8.2 percent. ACCESS programs have been increased by 2.3 percent in addition to 175,000 for a new program in developmental stage called the integrated Aboriginal Teacher Education, and we could talk about that later if the member so wishes.

Tuition in Manitoba remains among the lowest in Canada. As I am sure my colleague knows, the reduction of 10 percent was made in the year 2000 and we have maintained that reduction over five budgets. Manitoba Student Aid and the Manitoba Student Loan Service Bureau have been amalgamated into Manitoba Student Aid in the interests of providing more effective service to students. I think I will just not go into the specifics right now, but leave it to the member to ask questions.

I do want to say a word about bursaries. This year we have set aside 6.3 million for the Manitoba Bursary, 5 million for Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiatives, 2.3 for ACCESS bursaries and 1 million for other bursaries and grants.

In addition, there is 12.9 million for tuition rebate grants that is related to the tuition reduction; 2.9 million for medical student resident financial assistance; 2.1 million for Canada Study Grants; 11 million for the Canada Millennium Scholarship Bursary which comes from the federal government, at least, indirectly at this point; 0.35 million for graduate fellowships. I was very pleased last night to announce \$50,000 this year for the Helen Betty Osborne Memorial Fund Educational Award at the Helen Betty Osborne dinner last night. This will be continued for three years.

Student debt load levels in Manitoba have been reduced to an average of 6000 per year for most students, although through this \$6.3-million Manitoba Bursary and \$11-million Canada Millennium Scholarship Bursary. Manitoba Student Aid, formerly the Student Aid Loan Service Bureau, currently administers a portfolio of 33 million consisting of 13 000 loans. In the fiscal year '03-04, there were 9600 loans totalling \$22.6 million.

I think it is important to mention at this point that the percentage of students in Manitoba who actually take student loans is the lowest in Canada, I believe. If it is not the very lowest, it is certainly among the lowest. It is less than 25 percent. Now this

is who takes student loans from public sources. I mean students may be borrowing money from their families, I do not know. We do not keep a record of that because it is none of our business of course.

Enrolment increases. I am sure the member is aware that university and college enrolment has increased quite dramatically, over 30 percent since we have been in government. A word about Hydro Northern Training and Employment Initiative, our pre-project training. The initiative is proceeding to offer training to prepare northern Aboriginal residents for future hydro-electric employment opportunities. Over \$8 million has been invested to date. That is a combination of money from Manitoba and from Manitoba Hydro. Over 1300 individuals have been assessed. Over 400 training participants have been involved in a range of activities.

I have some other things here. We are working on a job registration referral service. The member may be interested in speaking about that later. This is specifically in relation to the hydro-electric projects in the North. Federal funding for these projects. Manitoba parties submitted a proposal of \$22 million requesting federal support for Manitoba pre-project training. That is, again, for this initiative in the North. The proposal. A proposal of one or two currently is among one or two that are currently being considered at the federal level and we hope for some good news very soon.

In '04-05, the projections with Hydro training are training activities that will be underway with each First Nation partner. Funds for other northern Aboriginals currently in development, we anticipate implementation by fall 2004. Potential of up to \$5 million to \$10 million training investment in pre-project training activities in '04-05.

A quick word about our adult—I keep saying "quick" and that is because I am trying to be quick to accommodate my colleagues so we can have lots of time to ask questions—learning literacy. Earlier this week I announced a grant of \$13.7 million to help support Manitoba's very vibrant adult education programming which is offered at 43 adult learning centres which operate at 70 sites across the province. Adult learning centres are tuition-free. They teach skills and courses that result in either a completed 28-credit high school diploma or a mature high—it must be mature student high school diploma but I have in my notes a mature high school diploma,

which indicates that somehow there is an immature one.

As well, our centres provide adults with high school diplomas, provide them the opportunity to upgrade specific courses that will enable them to access post-secondary education or employment opportunities. So, if a student has been away and wishes to return to post-secondary education, he or she may wish to polish his or her skills, and this offers that kind of opportunity.

\* (10:10)

Last year, '02-03, which is the last year for which we have complete information, 1000 diplomas were awarded and 9766 students completed 11 624 credits. So it seems that it is working very well.

This year we also have set aside a small amount of money for computer technology, refreshing computer technology in the adult learning centres. One of the things of course it is extremely important for modern students to know how to do is to have highly evolved computer skills, so what is taking place is students are graduating with computer skills as well as with the other credentials that I mentioned.

We are very pleased this year to have announced our new Technical Vocational Education Initiative. I announced it with Minister Bjornson. Can I say his name here? I am sorry. I do apologize. With the Minister for Education, Citizenship and Youth, we announced a three-year initiative which was valued at \$4.5 million. We will work in partnerships with schools, colleges, business, industry, labour and the communities. The initiative will link high school and college programming, so making it easier for students to proceed from high school to post-secondary education. It will also ensure skills learned by students are relevant to the current market needs, which help facilitate the acquisition of meaningful employment after graduation.

We thought it was really important and continue to think it is really important to update our technical vocational education programming.

Apprenticeship: This year marks the 60th anniversary of apprenticeship as a legislative training program in Manitoba. The Skills Canada competition, which will be held in Winnipeg at the end of May, provides the opportunity to highlight

this anniversary. This is a big coup for Manitoba to be hosting the Skills Canada competition. Approximately 1215 new registrations for a total of 4800 registered apprentices are expected in '04-05. Approximately 700 journeypersons will be certified through apprenticeship training in '04-05. Approximately 300 journeypersons are expected to become certified through the trades qualification examination process in '04-05. I think that is also known as TQ.

In-school technical training was provided to 2700 apprentices through the community college system and other training providers. That would, I assume, be '03-04 although I do not have a date here. There are continued joint ventures with the Aboriginal communities to increase Aboriginal participation in the apprenticeship programming. They include liaison with Aboriginal Apprenticeship Program advisory committee to ensure that the Aboriginal Apprenticeship Program is effectively promoting and enhancing training and employment opportunities in the skills trades for First Nations, Métis and Inuit, while meeting the unique local education and economic development needs of the community.

Just a word about our new community-based Bachelor of Education ACCESS program. I think I mentioned that earlier. This initiative supports the development of a community-based Bachelor of Education program in the Winnipeg area, whereby Aboriginal persons are trained and hired by school divisions as educational assistants and can complete the Bachelor of Education through summer and weekend coursework.

I think this is wonderful because it really tailors itself to persons who are family and have to support their family whilst they access post-secondary education.

A quick word about floodway training initiative. We are working with stakeholders. This initiative provides funding to train Manitobans for employment opportunities related to the expansion of the Red River Floodway and thereby contributing to meeting the future needs of skilled labour and the development of a more representative workforce in Manitoba.

I just also wanted to mention the University College of the North. I know that the member is

familiar with the act that has been tabled past second reading, and I believe we are in committee on Tuesday. The University College of the North, which was given a boost initially by the former Premier Filmon, is of course one of the things—one of the educational initiatives—I should not say "a thing"; that is a very inaccurate, non-descriptive word—that we really value. We see it as a jewel in the educational crown, I suppose.

We think it is so important to provide greater opportunities for northern peoples, particularly Aboriginal peoples, because we have not been doing a great job at preparing these people for post-secondary education. I could go into all the economic arguments as to why we should be doing this, but I think it is sufficient to say that these people deserve the same kinds of opportunities as other Manitobans. It is only justice. The other thing is, I think it is important to make the point that people should have control over education in their community, and that is also part and parcel of this project.

With those few words, thank you, Madam Chairperson, I am finished for now.

**Madam Chairperson:** We thank the Minister of Advanced Education and Training for those comments. Does the official opposition critic, the honourable Member for Steinbach, have any opening comments?

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Thank you very much, Madam Chairperson. I want to thank the minister for the comments that she put on the record. I think that they were helpful to me as a new critic. Certainly, I make mention of the fact that I am the new critic.

One of the critic's responsibilities that I have is Advanced Education and with that comes good things and bad things for the minister. One of the difficult things is I will have to put out a warning that this is somewhat a learning experience for me, learning the department, and no pun intended, but a learning experience for me as I go through the Estimates.

I received the Estimates books less than 24 hours ago so it was somewhat of a study session for me last night. I had some questions, of course, in advance, but the details of the department I went through last night. It was somewhat reminiscent of

my own university days cramming for upcoming exams, although there I usually had reasons of procrastination, I had no one but myself to blame. This, on the details anyway of the department, I had the opportunity just last night to go through.

I do appreciate the comments from the minister. I did have the opportunity to see her on TV last night making the presentation on the bursary, the grant for the Helen Betty Osborne Foundation, so I think that was positive and a good announcement to see.

As we go forward in the Estimates, it is worth noting I think my own perspective that I bring to the Estimates. It is not that long ago, in fact, not that long ago at all that I left the University of Manitoba as a graduate, a graduate for the third time actually of the University of Manitoba, having graduated from the Asper School of Business and the Faculty of Law so I have still very much a student's perspective in some ways in that sense. Some of the questions might reflect that perspective that I bring to the table and where that side of the classroom is coming from in some regard, and I think that is positive in a lot of ways.

I think the minister would recognize that Advanced Education is really about students and about providing that education for those that are there. Certainly, the minister in the past, I would say on the record without reservation, is passionate about the department. I think she approaches it with all the right intentions. I get the sense that the minister does care deeply about Advanced Education and that is positive. I would commend the minister for that. We might differ, of course, as parties often do on certain directions and certain policies, but I will not question any of the motivation of the minister. I think that is important to put on the record up front.

It was worthwhile going through the Estimates to note some of the initiatives in Training. I am less familiar with those areas of the department. Where there comes to the training initiative for the floodway, which the minister mentioned in her opening comments, I want to explore that a little bit further, whether it is training for the Hydro project in the North, and will have some questions on that as well.

Apprenticeship, which the minister mentioned, I will have some questions regarding that and perhaps some more detailed questions on the University

College of the North, which the minister correctly indicates, is on to committee in this Legislature. We will have opportunity to hear people present on the university at that time but we will certainly take the opportunity now to put forward some questions as that project moves forward.

\* (10:20)

I think that the staff that are here, I see a bit of an army of staff. I know there are some shared services within the department with Education and Youth. It is certainly not our intention to keep staff here unnecessarily. I know, as I look over at staff, that some of them were here for the Education and Training Estimates, if I am correct, and I do not want to give any fears or lay the fears early that it is our expectation that the Estimates for this particular department will wrap up at the conclusion of our committee today without any unforeseen occurrences happening.

So there should be some assurances there for the staff as they come forward, but I want to commend certainly all the staff in the department and of course those who are here today to participate in the Estimates process. But also those who are in the department who are not here today who kind of do the daily work of ensuring that there is the proper training and advanced education for our students in Manitoba. So with those brief comments as well, Madam Chair, I believe that we are ready to proceed.

**Madam Chairperson:** We thank the critic from the Official Opposition for those remarks.

Under Manitoba practice, debate of Minister's Salary is traditionally the last item considered for the Estimates of the department. Accordingly, we shall defer consideration of this item and proceed with the consideration of the remaining items referred in Resolution 44.1.

At this time we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table and we ask that the minister introduce her

**Ms. McGifford:** I am pleased to introduce my staff. First of all, Pat Rowantree, the Deputy Minister of Advanced Education and Training, and off in the corner is Curtis Nordman, who is the Director of Special Services and Student Aid.

Sitting beside him is Louise Gordon, who is the Executive Director of the Council on Post-Secretary Education; Veronica Dyck, who is Manager of the UCN Implementation Team; Claude Fortier, Finance; and Dwight Botting, who is the ADM of Training.

**Madam Chairperson:** We thank the minister.

We will now proceed to the remaining items contained in Resolution 44.1 on page 27 of the main Estimates book. Shall the resolution pass?

**Mr. Goertzen:** I wonder, Madam Chair, if we could have an agreement to have a global discussion on the Estimates as I indicated in my opening comments. It is our intention to move these Estimates forward by the end of the committee's allotted time here today. So there will not be any necessity for staff to return at another time and I also understand that the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mr. Gerrard) wants some time to ask questions as well. While I intend to go through my questions on a relatively systematic basis set out more or less with the schedule of the Estimates, I would like some latitude to move back and forth. I think the Liberal Leader will want some latitude as well.

**Madam Chairperson:** There has been a request for global discussion. Is there agreement? *[Agreed]*

**Mr. Goertzen:** Just some opening questions that are somewhat more into details and I will probably want to have more broad policy discussions at some point.

But in terms of the minister's executive staff, specifically her special assistant and executive assistant, could she tell me who those individuals are who are filling those positions currently and how long they have been in those positions?

**Ms. McGifford:** Yes, I could. My executive assistant is Doreen Wilson, and Doreen Wilson has been in her position since fall 1999. She has been in that position since the '99 election, or just after. My special assistant is Rick Rennie, and he has been in his position since October 2003. Time flies when you are having fun.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Can the minister indicate who was the special assistant prior to Mr. Rennie, who took over his position in October 2003, and if that individual is still with government in some capacity?

**Ms. McGifford:** Thank you for the question. The former special assistant was Susan McMurrich, and

Susan is a nurse by profession. She now works with Healthy Child Manitoba.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the minister for that answer. I think in previous Estimates, specifically last year, a critic went through a fairly detailed examination of the flow chart that is provided in the Estimates book this year on page 11. Rather than go through a name by name accounting, I wonder if the minister could just indicate if there are any individuals on that flow chart who have come into the department since the last Estimates process, which would have been, I think, September of 2003. Are there any new individuals who have come in on any of those positions indicated on the flow chart?

**Ms. McGifford:** No, there are no new individuals.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the minister for that indication. That certainly does save us some of the time.

**Ms. McGifford:** Excuse me, we have just realized that the person from Systems and Technology Services, the director Colin McDonald, began sometime during the last year, so this individual would not have appeared on the former flow chart in any capacity.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Just to follow up to that, was Mr. McDonald's position filled by a competition, and his predecessor—is it a new position, or is that position—did they leave?

**Ms. McGifford:** Old position, filled by competition.

I should note another new name that is supposed to appear on our chart is Don Robertson who has been chairing the University College of the North Implementation team. He was formerly the chair of COPSE, but he was certainly the individual that we deemed most capable for doing this work, so he is doing this work this year.

Tom Glenwright from Manitoba Student Aid was an employee on the other side that is in, what we call "the other side." That does not mean in the Tory party, by the way. That means in Education, Citizenship and Youth. He was working there and he is now with us.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the minister for those answers. Just some questions on the summary pages that are set out in the first few pages of the

descriptions. It notes that one of the goals of Advanced Education and Training is to expand the range of people that it has served. This is one of the questions that struck me about that, my background being more from the advanced education at the university side. This just brought the question to me.

Can you tell me what type of promotion happens for our universities outside of the province of Manitoba? I know there is a great deal of promotion that happens within the province for students, but I am wondering if Advanced Education plays an active role in promoting our major universities or our colleges outside of the province and if that funding is part of the operational grant that goes to universities and colleges and then they determine their own promotion activities, or does Advanced Education and Training have separate funds to do that promotion?

**Ms. McGifford:** When we talk in this context of expanding the range of people served, we really mean expanding educational opportunities to underrepresented groups within the province of Manitoba, for example disabled people, Aboriginal peoples, to some degree new immigrants, to some degree people who may not normally access post-secondary education for socio-economic reasons.

I just had a group in my office, for example, last week who are involved in a program called CUB, short for College and University Bound. It is a joint endeavour between Seven Oaks School Division, the University of Winnipeg and Red River College. It is encouraging students and families, where the families have not accessed post-secondary education, to at least opening up this opportunity and possibility. That is what we mean.

\*(10:30)

When you talk about advertising or encouraging individuals outside the province to attend university and college here, that really is work that is undertaken by the universities and colleges themselves. I have noticed a couple of advertisements I believe in *The Globe*. I am looking at my post-secondary person here. She might not know what I am talking about, but I have seen a couple of advertisements put out by University of Manitoba, for example, featuring their researcher who likes to ski across Lake Winnipeg and immerse himself in cold water. His name is Doctor Icicle or

something. This is a way of encouraging, you wonder if it is really going to encourage people. Anyway, it is their initiative.

I should tell my critic that we think the post-secondary scholarship that we announced is another way of our encouraging students to come to Manitoba because making a graduate scholarship or fellowship, depending on what you want to call it, available is certainly opening up the possibility of research attracting students who are interested in research and maintaining our professoriate who are interested in research because they can attract graduate students. The critic might remember when I announced it in the House, I talked about this as having a multiplier effect because when we put money into graduate scholarships, it also brings money from other levels of government.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I wonder if the minister could provide information on the amount of money that is spent in a fiscal year, maybe the last two fiscal years, on advertising done outside of the province to attract students into our university systems from perhaps the three major universities in the province.

**Ms. McGifford:** Well, when we give money to our universities and colleges, we give block grants, and they, of course, manage their own budgets. So the member would need to be in communication with the universities and colleges and ask them that question directly. We give block grants. We do not manage their budgets for them.

**Mr. Goertzen:** On page 5 of the Summary Descriptions, there is a discussion about retention of graduates. I know this question comes up, well I am guessing this question probably comes up every year in Estimates, so not to break with tradition I will ask it again because I think it is important in terms of, and it somewhat relates I suppose to the previous question I asked about the amount of advertising that goes on for students outside of the province. It is somewhat related to that.

On the issue of retention, I am assuming that one of the key indicators that the department would want to know is how many people graduating from our colleges, from our universities, are staying in Manitoba and using those skills that they obtained here in Manitoba, which are partially funded by taxpayers from Manitoba are utilized in Manitoba? I know that universities sometimes on their own do a

degree of this tracking because I have been the recipient of some of the letters that they send out in terms of tracking students and what they are doing, if they are using the skills that they obtained in a particular field. I am not sure that always provides a very strong indication because there is not always that type of feedback from students. Is the department doing, or has it done, any type of study to determine the retention rate that we have in Manitoba of our graduates?

**Ms. McGifford:** Of course, we in government recognize the importance of not only attracting students to our institutions but keeping them there, and also providing services that allow students to graduate. I think we have addressed in our opening remarks some of the initiatives that we have undertaken to retain students. I have mentioned the bursaries and scholarships. Of course, one of the reasons that students may leave an institution may be a lack of funds, so we try and provide financial support. The institutions, of course, provide in-house supports with the kind of special student services they have. In fact just this week I was at the University of Winnipeg when the new president, Lloyd Axworthy, announced the opening of the Aboriginal Students Services Centre providing these kinds of services that will keep students.

We do not have a firm fix on how many students are retained in Manitoba after graduation. We do know that we retain about 80 percent of our nurses and we think that is a real turnaround. We are very pleased with that. We are participating in a national graduate survey and the Manitoba numbers will be forthcoming in the near future, in the next few weeks, and I can share them with the member at that time.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I appreciate the comments from the minister. If my memory serves me correctly on Estimates last year, I think she mentioned the nurses retention last year, and that is an important part of it.

The national survey, then, that she refers to, will that specifically detail not, really, and the minister kind of referenced it, the number of people that are in our universities and potentially leave during the course of their studies? But I am specifically wondering about those who graduate from a Manitoba institution and then their employment after. Are they employed in the province of

Manitoba, or are they moving elsewhere? Will the national study indicate that?

**Ms. McGifford:** Exactly the latter, exactly as outlined by the member. It will address graduates. I am told we purchased an over-sample to get very accurate data. As I said, I will share them with the member when they are available to me.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the minister for that undertaking. I look forward to those results. Certainly, I know that, from my own experience in my most recent graduation from the Faculty of Law at the University of Manitoba, I believe half of the students left or went out of province after their graduation. There probably would not be a large hue and outcry in Manitoba about lawyers leaving the province, or potential lawyers, leaving the province. But I guess I wonder what the other facilities are experiencing, if there is a similar type of difficulty with retention and the training of our students, where they are going.

In keeping with my promise of trying to go on a fairly regimented page-by-page approach, on page 15 of the Estimates books, and I could also address this, I guess, in the specific appropriation, but I will just do it here under the Adult Learning and Literacy line, I just had a question regarding the fact that the FTEs remained the same year over year from the last Estimates expenditure to this one, but there is a substantial increase in the salaries. Was that attributable to a general increase over the nine staff individuals? Was there a particular reason for that?

**Ms. McGifford:** I am informed that there was at least one re-classification and so the salary was adjusted in accordance. The registrar, Anna Beauchamp, I believe she obtained a Master's degree in adult education during the past year.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the minister for those details. Can she provide how much of the increase that is indicated in the Estimates book, is attributable to that individual reclassification?

\* (10:40)

**Ms. McGifford:** We are taking a look at it. If the member wants to ask another question, we can return with that piece of information.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the minister for that. The next question relates to the Council on Post-Secondary Education and I might repeat this question, I guess, in other parts of the Estimates process, but there is an indication of a loss of one FTE, I believe on page 33 is the appropriation. It is a professional technical position that is lost. I want to know if the minister can give me details in terms of what the job description was that was eliminated, if in fact it was eliminated, or is that position just not going filled. I note that there is a note on page 33, and there are similar notes throughout the Estimates books, regarding the Government's commitment to affordability. That sounds like it was written by a Conservative, so it is difficult to have argument with the phraseology there. But I do have questions regarding the nature of the position that was eliminated in the Council on Post-Secondary Education.

**Ms. McGifford:** I am told it was a vacant position for a financial analyst, and it has been unfilled for two years.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the member for that response and I am not sure if this question necessarily fits under this appropriation but I was not sure where else to add it in.

Can the minister indicate if there are any collective agreements coming due in our post-secondary institutions in the coming year that might have an impact or a disruption on students' studies over the next twelve months?

**Ms. McGifford:** The answer is, basically, no. The colleges have signed. The University of Manitoba has a three-year agreement and the other universities, their agreements are not up this year.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Thank you for that answer. Could the minister give me a little more detail, maybe for my own knowledge, on the Council on Post-Secondary Education's process in terms of assessing post-secondary educational needs of the province, and the ability of the universities to meet that need? What kind of a process, or is it an annual process review that happens in terms of determination? I am assuming it is working with the universities. Could she just give me some indication on how that process takes place on an annual basis?

**Ms. McGifford:** It is an annual process and each institution makes a presentation to the Council on



Post-Secondary Education which outlines its goals, et cetera, but also its financial, I was going to say needs, desires might be a more accurate word because there is always a gap between what we hope for and what we get. That is the process.

If I could just return to the member's question on the ALC, I think it was on page 15, I am told that there was a 42.2 difference, that reclassification was a \$9,000 adjustment, a general salary increase 7.8, and other is 15.4.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the minister and her staff for providing that answer.

This question, or maybe a few questions, does not necessarily relate, it might fall properly under the Council on Post-Secondary Education, it might not, but it is in regard to Manitoba's tuition freeze which has been extended for another year. Can the minister indicate which other provinces or how many other provinces currently operate under a tuition freeze in Canada?

**Ms. McGifford:** To the best of my knowledge, Newfoundland, Ontario, as I am sure the member knows, just announced, I believe, a two-year freeze. Why do we not use the term reduction?

**Mr. Goertzen:** I think it is freeze right now, there was a reduction probably in 1999 or 2000. I think I benefited actually from that reduction, so I can thank the minister for that at that time, but I think I narrowly escaped the rocketing tuitions in the Faculty of Law. I just got out in the nick of time, I suppose.

I would ask the question in terms of faculty fees. This has been a bit of an ongoing issue, I think, for students, and I have certainly heard it from the students that I know. They hear that there is a tuition freeze year over year and to them, in their minds what that means is—and they budget for this—that the cost of their education will exactly the same as it was the prior year.

Yet there are instances, I know Brandon University, I think a number of students spoke out just recently, it may have been in the last few months, about increased fees that are associated. In fact it appears April 23, 2004, in the *Brandon Sun* under the heading "Fees Sore Spot for Brandon University Students." There is an indication there

from students that these kind of ancillary fees are increasing at a very rapid rate. So the expectation of a tuition freeze does not seem to meet what the students believe it will year over year because they see these additional fees going up.

Now, I am not sure to what extent the Department of Advanced Education plays in monitoring those fees, to what extent they play in reviewing those fees as they might go up year after year. The article, rightly or wrongly, leaves this impression that this is kind of a way around the tuition freeze for certain faculties and they try to find ways to increase fees, whether it is fees for reviewing exams or whether it is appeal fees. They have been increased as a way to move around this tuition freeze. Does the department do any kind of monitoring of that or play any role in that?

**Ms. McGifford:** I am pleased that the member opposite escaped the increase in law school fees and in fact benefited from the reduction. I have not escaped that increase. I have two daughters in law school, so I have not escaped it. Just to show there is no partisanship taking place here.

I do want to tell the member, too, whilst we are talking about the whole subject of tuition, that we have allowed tuitions to increase in Law. I had a very interesting and cogent presentation from the dean, Harvey Sexter, with whom I am sure the member is familiar, and he was very persuasive.

The other two faculties that we have allowed the tuition to increase in are Pharmacy. We have not had any complaints. Pharmacists are in demand. We do have a set of criteria that we impose before we will agree to any tuition increase. Furthermore, even if all those increases are not agreed to, it does not necessarily mean that the school will have an increase.

The member will notice that the third one that I am going to refer to is Dentistry. All three schools are professional schools. From all three schools we can expect the graduates to make a very handsome income, particularly Dentistry, I might add. The increases in Dentistry have resulted in really sophisticated technological equipment. I have had the opportunity to actually practise drilling teeth, fake teeth, rest assured, and as you are drilling a tooth there is an image on a computer that assesses how well you are doing the drilling. I failed, I will

not be a dentist. But the short story here is, because of this infusion of technological equipment and advanced equipment at the School of Dentistry, we are now considered to be one of the leading dental colleges in North America. So the increase has been beneficial.

The member has been talking about fees. The user fees that you are referring to, that the member, pardon me, Madam Chair, that the member was referring to are not approved by us. They do not come to us for approval; those are measures that would be taken within the institution. I am not aware—I have not had a call from my office about user fees at Brandon. I realize that the member cited a newspaper article.

\* (10:50)

What I hear from students, particularly the Canadian Federation of Students, is overwhelming support for the continuation of the reduction. In fact, the Canadian Federation of Students has asked that the tuition reduction, which they called the freeze, be legislated. Of course we are not legislating it. I am sure the member is familiar with the public discussions about that matter.

I do not know that there have been crippling user fees. I do not know that user fees have been used to offset the tuition reduction. It has not been brought to my attention by students, but I am certainly open to students bringing it to my attention.

I do meet regularly with the Canadian Federation of Students. The Canadian Federation of Students meets with the Council on Post-Secondary Education. I do meet regularly with the CASA, the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations: the other student group, the one that is not the Canadian Federation of Students, the one to which Red River community college and University of Manitoba belong. In fact, I went out to the University of Manitoba and spent some time in the students' chambers which are absolutely gorgeous, by the way. They did not bring up this issue.

If students have an issue and the member has a connection with students who would like to speak to me about it, I would certainly be more than willing to speak to them.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the minister for her comments. Certainly, there are students who spoke

out about it in the individual article, and I recognize not every student will feel comfortable phoning the minister. I know students who have gone through fee increases in faculties like the Asper School of Business, and it is not their first inclination to phone the Minister of Advanced Education because I do not know if they see the connection necessarily. But I do think there are concerns out there and I would encourage the department, if it is not tracking those types of increases, to do so, Madam Minister.

Madam Chair, I would ask the minister, and she did touch on it, I think, in relation to the Faculty of Law increases. I am sorry to hear that her children have not escaped those increases. I guess they probably were not part of the debate when it was going on at Robson Hall regarding those increases. But I certainly do wish them better than average incomes as she indicates they might have. I am not sure if I fell into that category after my graduation from the Faculty of Law. But I am also not complaining about the salary that I make so I am not going to go down that road. I do want to ask the question in terms of the process for increasing fees. Individual faculties have obviously made that application.

Can the minister just give me an update on what that particular process is if an individual faculty, professional or not, is looking to increase student fees?

**Ms. McGifford:** Well, the representation usually comes to the Council on Post-Secondary Education usually, I would assume, through the president, who acts on behalf of the dean of the professional school that would be requesting the increase.

But before I get into our criteria, I did want to tell the member opposite that the president of the Brandon Students' Union, David Cannon, is on record for supporting increased tuition fees. There seems to be a little bit of a difference of opinion among the Brandon student group, which, of course, is not surprising because students are not always of the same mind. It is just that the rest of us are not.

I also wanted to assure the member that students are not shy about phoning my office. They really are not. Furthermore, if students do not phone my office, do not know to phone, "Oh, let's phone up the Minister of Advanced Education," then the students may phone the caucus, they may phone the Premier's

office and they are directed to my office. So I do assure the member we get lots of calls from students, and I do not think he should worry about students being shy and retiring. I mean, he is an example himself, is he not? Not shy. You are not shy. Pardon me.

I am going to return now to the policy. In March of 2002 we advised the University of Manitoba, and it is the University of Manitoba who has asked for fee increases for their professional schools, obviously because that is where the professional schools are housed, that any exception to our tuition policy would have to meet five basic criteria, and I could either read them into the record or share them with the member. I am wondering whether the member prefers that they be read into the record. We will provide them. My staff person is making a note so you can expect those.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, I thank the minister for that undertaking. I am sure that I will receive them shortly. I am not sure and I do not mean to drag Mr. Cannon into some sort of dispute about what his position is on fee increases. I just know from this particular article that he expresses his disappointment that students were not consulted about the fee hikes, so I guess that does not speak to his position on the fee hikes just perhaps the process by which they were undertaken. But for Mr. Cannon—

**Madam Chairperson:** Could you repeat that? The minister could not hear.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Absolutely. In the article that I was referencing, the April 23, 2004 article from the *Brandon Sun*, if I understood correctly from the minister's last comment she had suggested that the president of the Brandon University Students' Union, Mr. Cannon, was in favour of the fee hikes. Just quoting from the article, it says, "Mr. Cannon was disappointed that students weren't consulted about the fee hikes." So I do not want to put Mr. Cannon's position on the record, I will just quote from the article. Again, it is quite possible he could have been in favour of the fee hikes but was not happy with the process, but in fairness to the president of the Brandon University Students' Union I want to put those comments on the record.

**Ms. McGifford:** I would urge the member if he has a link with Mr. Cannon that Mr. Cannon register his disappointment with the administration at Brandon

University because that is the body that levied these fee increases. What Mr. Cannon said when he made a presentation at the Council on Post-Secondary Education, that he preferred tuition increases to any reduction in program offerings. So that would be on the record at COPSE. But perhaps we have discussed Mr. Cannon long enough if the member is satisfied.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Somewhere in the province, Mr. Cannon's ears are burning, as my mom would say, from all these people talking about him. So we will move on from Mr. Cannon's comments.

The next question I have for the minister is in regard to if any kind of study is being done or maybe it is being part of the national study, though I doubt it, because it is more specific to Manitoba. I am curious about the students who are coming to Manitoba institutions for their education. If there is any indication of whether they are coming because of the types of programs that are available in Manitoba that might not be available in other areas of the province or is the question being asked if they are coming here simply because of the lower tuition fees than might be available in their home province. Is there any research that would go toward answering that question?

**Ms. McGifford:** I am told that the numbers of students from other provinces who are coming to Manitoba are in keeping with past numbers. So I do not think there are a lot of students coming here to benefit from the tuition reduction. But, of course, even if they were they would be adding to our economy whilst they were here.

But I might take this time to mention to the member, although, international education is now housed with the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade (Ms. Mihychuk), I might take this opportunity to mention to the member that we are very pleased that the numbers of international education have doubled over the course of the past couple of years. We think that this is wonderful for our province because we hope that we can work hand in glove with the Minister of Immigration (Ms. Allan) and retain some of these students as citizens in the province of Manitoba.

The member may or may not know that, during the time that international education was part of my department, we worked with the Citizenship Immigration Canada to obtain a very special status

for international students in Manitoba, and that was to allow students to work off-campus 20 hours a week. This is an experimental endeavour, and we think this is another way of getting these international students to participate in the wider job market and perhaps increase our chances of retaining them as Manitoba citizens. Of course, they are highly trained and professional people, so they would be fine additions to our province and to the province's economy.

\* (11:00)

**Mr. Goertzen:** I wonder if the minister could indicate if there have been any kinds of studies done? The concerns that I raise here have been raised in other places. They have been raised certainly in editorials on education, tuition freezes and they have been raised by others in the post-secondary system, though less so by students, I would acknowledge, probably because of the terms of reference that they are currently in.

In regard to the tuition freeze, certainly the British Columbia experience, in a number of faculties, after the tuition freeze was lifted in that province, there was, I think, one editorial referred to it as a boomerang effect where the tuitions went up almost exponentially in certain faculties. I guess the concern that has been raised among a number of people is that the sustainability of a tuition freeze in Manitoba is at question. I think legitimately so. It is not feasible to say that a tuition freeze will remain in Manitoba indefinitely.

So the question would be: Is there any kind of analysis that has been done on the type of pressure that is within our system that, if a tuition freeze were to be lifted, what the effect would be? Would there be a similar effect to what happened in British Columbia after their long tuition freeze?

**Ms. McGifford:** Well, one of the differences between Manitoba and B.C., I think it is important for the member to note, in B.C. there was no control, no governmental control when the reduction was lifted, so it was kind of free market. I have spoken to students and shared information with them and promised them that if the tuition reduction is lifted, if changes are made, there will not be exponentially galloping increases and that there would be modest, affordable increases. We were and are and will be dedicated to affordability and accessibility in post-

secondary education, believing that the greater the numbers of post-secondary students that we prepare for the future economy, the stronger our economy will be, the stronger our social fabric, the stronger our communities.

I have given the students this assurance. I am sure the member is familiar with the Premier (Mr. Doer) having said that the reduction will not last forever.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the minister for her response. Madam Chairperson, one of the things everybody would agree here is that different students have different realities in terms of their economic abilities to pay. Some of that, of course, I guess, is reflected in an application for student aid, and hopefully we will get to some of those questions before this committee adjourns.

Has any consideration been given in terms of, or a study been done in terms of the elimination of a 10% reduction in tuition freeze that was instituted in 1999, I believe, or 2000 and redirecting that money more specifically into programs to help those students who have a demonstrated need for education?

**Ms. McGifford:** I wanted to make the point that of course I read off the list of bursaries and scholarship monies that our Government offers and the member might notice that one of the items was a \$6.3-million Manitoba bursary, which we instituted in the spring of 2000 and that is, of course, targeted to needy students or students whose needs are greater than those of others. I know that the access bursaries, \$2.3 million for access bursaries, are also targeted to students whose needs are high. I am sure that the member is familiar with access programs. Often the students are returning later in life, they are parents, et cetera, and so those are two avenues for supporting the kinds of students that the member has discussed. I am sure the member realizes that government compensates for that reduction by returning that money to the universities and colleges. I think it was \$12 million last year to universities and colleges last year, so that is where that funding is going right now, into the coffers of the universities to compensate for the 10 percent that they would have got if the reduction had not occurred.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Can the minister clarify for me, Madam Chairperson, regarding that 10% reduction, and I appreciate what she is saying about the money

going into the universities and I think that that would, certainly, be something we would be in favour of maintaining, but the question is, more specifically, and it is probably more of a policy question, does the minister consider that 10% reduction to be part of the tuition freeze or, hypothetically, if that 10% reduction was done away with but tuitions did not increase beyond that 10 percent, would that still be part of a commitment to remain in a tuition freeze?

**Ms. McGifford:** I am a little unclear as to exactly what the member is asking, but I think the member is asking if tuition were to increase, let us say, by 4 percent next year for example, would the compensating money become part of the base budgets of the universities and colleges? The answer is yes.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the minister for her response. This will be part of the operation of grant funding questions that I want to ask and I think the reference goes back to the summary of page 6, so I apologize for doing what I said I would not do and skipping around a bit. If I understand correctly, operational funding increased for our major universities 1.8 percent, but for some institutions, specifically the private institutions like Providence College and Steinbach Bible College the operational grant remains static from the previous years. Is that correct?

**Ms. McGifford:** Not totally correct. I believe there was a small increase to the Canadian Mennonite University.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I am sure the minister can anticipate my next question in terms of what the rationale was for, not so much for the increase to 1.8 percent, but not increasing the operational funding for institutions like Providence College and the Steinbach Bible College.

**Ms. McGifford:** Well, the rationale is, of course, these are private colleges. Government does not have representation on their boards. Government has a memorandum of understanding with the Canadian Mennonite University and we honour that memorandum of understanding and we have continued to provide funds to all the institutions that the member has cited, but as I say, they are private institutions and we have certain points of view on

private institutions that may differ from those of the member opposite.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I wonder if the minister can maybe elaborate on her last comment about the different points of view that she believes we hold between our party and the party that she represents in government. What specifically does she mean in terms of our different points of view?

**Ms. McGifford:** This is, obviously, a very large discussion but I think basically it comes down to the fact that we think if we put public money into institutions they should be public institutions.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Is the minister indicating that she does not believe that operation of funding should be going at all—and I want to give her the chance to clarify—to institutions like Providence College and Steinbach Bible College?

**Ms. McGifford:** Well, I understand we are following the model of the previous government which in 1997 increased to the current level and then in 1999 made no adjustments although they did to the other institutions, so perhaps we have more in common as parties than first meets the eye because we seem to be in agreement on funding to these institutions.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I just want to, not to belabour this point, and I will not belabour it, but if I understood the minister correctly in her comments and I will review Hansard obviously with them, but I thought I understood her to say that she thought if there was public money it should be into public institutions. To me, I guess anybody who was reading that from an institution like Steinbach Bible College or Providence or of course the other private faith-based institutions might take that as a bit of a warning shot that the minister does not believe that any public money should be going into these institutions because they are not public institutions. Is that correct?

\* (11:10)

**Ms. McGifford:** Madam Chair, in our 2000 Budget, our 2001 Budget, our 2003 Budget, our 2004 Budget, we have given money to these private institutions. I think that indicates support for these private institutions.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I do appreciate the minister clarifying that she does support these private institutions. That will be some cause of comfort for my many friends who are involved in those institutions and who attend the programming there. I will be sure that they are aware of the support that the minister has indicated on the record here today.

Moving on to another subject, can the minister indicate and maybe she can clarify it for me, I am not certain under the individual charters but are institutions like Brandon University or University of Winnipeg or University of Manitoba allowed to run an operating deficit during the year?

**Ms. McGifford:** No, I understand according to the acts which govern those universities, they are not allowed to run a deficit.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the minister for that answer. So, then on issues, this year we had a 1.8% increase, I believe it was, for operational funding. Can the minister maybe elaborate a little bit in terms of the process in terms of how that number is arrived at? I guess the public feeling might be that it was somehow just arrived at simply because that is what the government can afford that year, and I imagine there is an element to that and rightfully so. Could she just indicate what kind of consultation happens with the different universities in terms of what the operational funding will be year over year?

**Ms. McGifford:** Of course, the 1.8, the overall budget for Advanced Education is a very intimate part of the whole Treasury Board process. The process begins with the universities and colleges making their yearly presentations to the Council on Post-Secondary Education where they outline their perceived needs and expectations. Anyway let me just leave it at that, their perceived needs and expectations. They outline the directions they would like to go, their programming, the view of the university and the college and where it is proceeding.

From there, the Council on Post-Secondary Education prepares a package of information for me, the minister, or whoever the minister happens to be at that time, based on their deliberations with the universities and colleges. That document comes over to me, and it becomes part of the Estimates that my department submits to Treasury Board and then Treasury Board—I am sure the member is familiar at least in theory with the Treasury Board process. So

then the Treasury Board process takes place, and decisions are made and then published in the Minister of Finance's budget and then announced when the Budget is read.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I am guessing that the universities, and it is only a guess, I have more a theoretical knowledge of Treasury Board, but in terms of the university process, do they come forward with a number in terms of their percentage increases they want to see for the year? Is it that formalized?

**Ms. McGifford:** I am informed that they do come forward with a percentage increase, along with a lot of other detailed information. I want to assure the member as well that the universities and colleges work much more intensely with the Council on Post-Secondary Education, but it is quite common for the presidents and chairs of the institutions to speak to me, too. We have very cordial relationships so that there are many venues for academic information coming to my office.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Certainly I am assured that that consultation takes place. Can the minister indicate specifically for Brandon University, the University of Winnipeg and the University of Manitoba what they were asking for in terms of an increase for the fiscal year?

**Ms. McGifford:** That information is a dialogue between the council, and I prefer not to discuss it publicly at this time without having assurance that it is appropriate to discuss it publicly. So we would need to consult with our FIPPA people.

**Mr. Goertzen:** The minister mentions the word "dialogue." Are there written submissions that are put forward to the minister or is it dialogue in the terms of there are verbal conversations between the institutions and the minister's staff or yourself personally?

**Ms. McGifford:** I think it is important that we distinguish between the minister and the council. The written proposals, the written submissions go to the council and not to the minister. The member might remember a few minutes ago I talked about the council amalgamating the presentations of the various universities and colleges and presenting it to me.

I think it is important for the member to realize the minister does not receive these proposals and

these presentations. I think that is as it should be because the Council on Post-Secondary Education has been designed to be at arm's length from the government body that makes these kinds of academic decisions so that it is not government interfering in the workings and proceedings of our universities and colleges on a daily basis or even on a yearly basis.

**Mr. Goertzen:** In the interest of time, I will have to move around to a few different areas. If that causes inconvenience for staff, I apologize for that in advance.

Regarding the University of the North project, which the minister referenced in her opening comments, and then, of course, there is legislation before the Legislature and going before committee soon, can the minister indicate for me is there operational money that is being set aside this year yet for the University of the North or for the coming fiscal year?

**Ms. McGifford:** There is \$255,000 set aside for completing the implementation phase and \$750,000 has been set aside for development.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I am sorry. Can the minister clarify more specifically what the \$750,000 development entails?

**Ms. McGifford:** I am sure the member remembers from The University College of the North Act, that the plan is to create an interim council which will be in place for two years. Some of the duties of the interim council will be to develop the university programming that would become part of the University College of the North and to prepare transitioning from the interim council to the governing council, the learning council, et cetera. The \$750,000 will be used for that kind of work.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Can the minister indicate, because I missed it and I am sure it is here somewhere, where in the Appropriations that money appears?

**Ms. McGifford:** It appears on page 35, Support for Universities and Colleges, Other Expenditures, Grants/Transfer Payments.

\* (11:20)

**Mr. Goertzen:** I wonder if the minister can indicate for me, and I thank her for the last answer regarding

Capital Allocation for the University of the North project. I understand there are renovations going on at Keewatin Community College and some of it relates. I know the minister indicated in her opening statements some of the difficulties that were being had in the buildings and that is certainly understandable. What is the nature of the broader expansion that is happening at Keewatin Community College, if it is broader at all, or is it just simply related to the health concerns that were raised?

**Ms. McGifford:** I think I cited \$1.8 million in mould remediation. I do not know if the member has had the opportunity to visit the Thompson campus, but it is a very interesting experience. I urge him to do it, but anyway \$1.8 million for mould remediation. I have not had the report of the implementation team yet. I believe we will get that toward the end of June, and the implementation team may have some suggestions for a facility expansion.

However, I do want to take this time to put on the record, as I have several times before, that the concept behind the University College of the North, and I know that the member is familiar with the whole idea of virtual education because he spoke about it in his address on the University College of the North, is not to have a grand campus anywhere. It is to be more community-based education. We have two major locations, one in The Pas, one in Thompson, obviously on the east and west side of our northern province. Then there are several community-based facilities in the community where education programs could be delivered. There are other possibilities with developing and evolving technology.

We are using the expression key campuses and community-based campuses, so our key campuses are Thompson and The Pas and our community-based campuses are pretty numerous right now.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the minister for that answer and certainly I think that there is agreement on this side of the House in terms of the overall vision, in terms of not being a grand capital expenditure that certainly university education can be applied and provided in a number of different ways with modern technology. I have seen that transformation through my own academic career about how things have changed and the ability to do education in many other ways other than the standard kind of classroom

environment, although that has its advantages in certain applications as well, of course.

I wonder if the minister could indicate what the time line is. Just on the record, I know she invited me to visit the Thompson location and, I am recently appointed into this position, but I certainly would like to do that at some point in the future. I hope to take the minister up on that invitation, not that she suggested that we go together, but I certainly plan to make the trip at some point.

Can the minister indicate when the University College of the North is planning to start conferring—not conferring degrees necessarily because that is a bit of a process, but in terms of offering classes, what the time frame is?

**Ms. McGifford:** I thank the member for his support, and his party's support, for the legislation. We certainly hope to move it through the House expeditiously. There is a five-year development plan. It is still under consideration. It will be tabled by the end of the interim council's—yes, the plan will be tabled by—the implementation team's mandate which runs out on June 30 of this year. So we will certainly be looking forward to the details of that development plan.

**Mr. Goertzen:** The minister indicated a question or two ago regarding the \$1.8 million for the work on the mould problem at Keewatin Community College. I understand, then, that there is no work being done in terms outside of what is being needed to be done to take care of that problem. There is no additional work being done to expand the college or to update facilities beyond what is needed for that particular health concern, I suppose.

**Ms. McGifford:** That is accurate. Of course, there are the ongoing maintenance issues that take place in an institution. Walls need to be painted, holes in walls repaired, that sort of thing. But, no, there is no major facility being considered at all. I think, as I said, we will find out the recommendations of the implementation team when their report is tabled at the end of June.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the minister for that response as well. In relation to the process leading up to the University College of the North, and the minister can forgive me if some of these questions have appeared

in prior Estimates, but I would like to go over it for my own case.

Regarding the lead up to the decision to build, which might not be the appropriate word if there is not that kind of capital investment, but institute, the University and College of the North, what type of a business case or analysis was done in terms of the number of students that is expected will use the university? Were there examinations done of other jurisdictions? British Columbia, I understand, has a number of northern universities, to determine on a business case basis. I know academics is not always a business case basis, but I am assuming there was some study that was done in terms of the need for the institution.

**Ms. McGifford:** Well, maybe I can just outline a little bit about the whole evolution of the institution. I am sure that the member will find it interesting. I mentioned earlier that Premier Gary Filmon had given his blessing to this endeavour. It was in spring 1999 that MKO, along with several other individuals, visited the then-premier and presented this idea to him. He was apparently intrigued and created a committee including officials from the Council on Post-Secondary Education to examine the whole endeavour and come back with a plan, which they did. They came back with their plan in November 2000, presented it to the Premier and the Premier turned this plan over to my Department of Advanced Education.

We, some time after that, created a consultation team which was chaired by a very notable Aboriginal educator, Verna Kirkness, and staffed by Curtis Nordman, who is with us today. They toured the North, got recommendations from the people, brought back that plan. It was that plan that became the impetus for the University College of the North's implementation team of which Veronica Dyck, who is with us today, I think we heard she is the manager, and the chair of that group is Don Robertson.

Also I think it is important to make the point that we have consulted very widely. The MMF, for example, was invited to consultations regarding post-secondary education in the North. This was prior to Doctor Kirkness tabling her report which was entitled The University College of the North Recommendations and Action Plan. Perhaps I can leave it at that for now, and the member may have some other questions.



\* (11:30)

**Mr. Goertzen:** I am assuming that, in the absence of having seen the report yet, and I will endeavour to do that, certainly there was an analysis done on the number of students, the expectation of usage for the University College of the North that was done at that time.

**Ms. McGifford:** Much of the activity that ensued was based on existing programming. The IUN, Inter-Universities North, KCC, BUNTEP, there is a nursing program, a social work program in the North, and so the member was asking about numbers. So much of our information was based on registrants and numbers in these programs. I am also told that the implementation team is examining First Nations students' numbers in Grades 9 through 12 in the vicinity that would be serviced by the University College of the North. So, yes, they do have some pretty solid demographic information and that is very important in the work that they are doing.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Can the minister indicate, again, on the same veins of studies and perhaps it was in the same study I referenced, whether or not an analysis was done on feasibility, if you want to use that word, but more so I think the business case motto for the University of the North? Moving away from that, but possibly in the same study, was an analysis done on what impact the University College of the North might have on existing universities, such as Brandon University, in terms of students that might otherwise have gone to Brandon or might otherwise have accessed distance education through Brandon or the University of Manitoba? Has a study been done on that potential impact on the University College of the North?

**Ms. McGifford:** Well, a specific study has not been done, but I do want to assure the members, both members here now, that my department consulted widely, the implementation team consulted widely with presidents of universities and colleges. I have also met with the Council of Presidents of Universities in Manitoba, also known as COPUM. I have spoken with them and I am assured by COPUM that all the presidents are extremely supportive, and Brandon University was represented on the first committee.

I also want to make the point for the member opposite that we are undertaking, at least for several

years, will be to offer joint degrees and that kind of support we hope will prevail, relationships with other institutions. We are on the same side.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Okay, the first question I have deals with apprenticeship programs and related training. I received an e-mail recently and let me just quote a little bit from it, "The issue I am writing about concerns a critical shortage of second- and first-class power engineers in Manitoba. I am a second-class power engineer, stationary engineer, and am working and trying to study to get my first-class licence. Many plants are running short of enough qualified people and many chief engineers are retiring. It takes a long time to get replacements and a lot of overtime is worked to cover shifts and to provide overtime and vacation relief."

This is one example of a shortage of skills. Perhaps you can address this specifically, but perhaps you can also provide a little bit of information, more broadly, about apprenticeship and skills training efforts.

**Ms. McGifford:** I have just been conferring with staff and have some information to offer. First of all, I think we need to distinguish between apprenticeship and skills development. They are not necessarily the same thing so I am wondering if the member wishes to ask about apprenticeship, which is tied into the market and skills development. I am also told that the individual's credential that you cited is not a designated trade.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Well, let me address the situation with power engineers and then let us get into the broader question. Why, in terms of the need which is there and, obviously, people like this individual who are interested in pursuing this career, why is it not designated and where does it fit in terms of apprenticeships, skills training support?

*Mr. Doug Martindale, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

**Ms. McGifford:** I am told that trades are designated when employers, employees come to the apprenticeship board and request designation and that in recent history there has no request for this particular designation. In fact, this engineering credential to which the member is referring is licensed under the labour act, Department of Labour.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Just so that I can navigate through the waters here, are you saying that the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) is the person responsible or is it the Minister of Advanced Education and Training? For an individual like this who raises this as a significant issue, if this is not coming forward so far, but it may be a significant issue, would the minister be willing to pursue this and look into the need in this area?

**Ms. McGifford:** We are trying to address this need. I want to point out that we have added 15 power engineering spaces at ACC in Brandon and Labour is responsible for the licensing standards.

**Mr. Gerrard:** One of the things that I am hearing is that because of the way there has not been a co-operative, industry-government-labour framework for supporting, that you end up with people who are taking these courses. In fact he later says in this e-mail, some people take the bull by the horns, take a leave from work, go to Red River College on their own, and then take off to greener pastures outside of the province because of the opportunities and the salary scales elsewhere. He says, "basically who can blame them?"

Maybe it is something that the minister needs to have a look at and to see whether there should be some efforts taken in this area.

**Ms. McGifford:** Well, I thank the member for his advice.

**Mr. Gerrard:** What is the minister doing in relationship to developing a vision for the University of Winnipeg with a new president just arriving?

**Ms. McGifford:** Well, I have enjoyed my meetings with Doctor Axworthy. I have had a couple of them. Of course, I do not work hand-in-glove with the University of Winnipeg. We have had quite an elaborate discussion already this morning, and pointed out that the University of Winnipeg, along with other institutions including our community colleges, makes annual presentations to the Council on Post-Secondary Education and in those presentations outlines its desires, needs, expectations where it would like to go.

\* (11:40)

However, I did have a meeting with Doctor Axworthy, actually on his first day at the job. He

expressed to me some of the things he is interested in. We expressed some of the things that we were interested in as far as our education agenda is concerned. We both agreed we would like to see the University of Winnipeg become—since it is an urban university, it seemed to both of us that it would be only natural for this institution to become more hospitable, even home to Aboriginal students in our city. So we have this point of agreement and several other points of agreement.

We look forward to working with Doctor Axworthy. He has some wonderful ideas for all parts of the province. I know that we will have a co-operative relationship. It has already started.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Could the minister tell us her vision in terms of the Campus Manitoba program, whether there are going to be plans for additional sites, whether the links between the delivery of courses from universities and those from colleges are going to be closer, tied together and so on?

**Ms. McGifford:** Yes, we are currently working on a strategic plan to examine the issues that the member has raised. I do want to bring to his attention that Red River community college courses are unavailable through Campus Manitoba.

Of course, we are very interested in the possibilities that might present themselves with regard to the University College of the North. Today I attended a meeting at the University of Manitoba and had a conversation with the director of Campus Manitoba. We have an agreement to get together when the House rises and have a discussion about the work that he is doing.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Just one other issue and that has to do with immigrants coming into Manitoba and the issue of apprenticeship, credentials, training, integration. What role does the Minister of Advanced Education and Training see, and what is she doing?

**Ms. McGifford:** Just while my staff is getting some information together, I thought the member might be interested to know that we have a new pilot project at Pine Falls, Manitoba, which is combining the adult learning centre with Campus Manitoba, so I think that is very interesting.

I am advised by our staff that the process is, first of all, in Manitoba, the member may know, that trade

certification is only achieved after successful completion of a certification exam. New immigrants are referred to us by settlement, and their training may be recognized by the Apprenticeship branch. They may apply to write their certification exam. They may qualify for the TQ process, and I understand there are accommodations made if English is not the first language, so that there is that possibility.

Well, basically, I suppose the member might be interested in knowing that we are working very well with the Department of Labour in this endeavour, and I am assured that we have one of the smoothest, best processes in the country, that it is recognized as doing a good job.

**Mr. Goertzen:** While the staff is there, related to the question that the Leader for the Liberal Party just posed, certainly it is a very specific concern in the constituency that I represent, the constituency of Steinbach, which has benefited greatly from immigration. There is no question about that, and there would be no suggestion that immigration has not benefited the community. Certainly it places challenges on the community in different areas, but by and large, I think it is recognized that it has been positive for the Province and the Provincial Nominee Program, which was brought in by the former Conservative government and maintained by the current government to their credit. It has been beneficial, but the relationship between those coming in and not being able to use the skills that they have attained in their home countries is certainly a concern that comes up a number of times within my own community.

I relate to the minister an experience that I had just about a month ago when I met with a group of recent immigrants, probably about 60 in my area, as part of a class that they were taking. I believe it was an ESL class. When I opened the floor to questions, there was not a hand in the room that did not go up, and 95 percent of the questions were related to the fact that they or their spouses were not able to use the skills that they had acquired in their own countries here in Manitoba.

Clearly, there is an element of self-regulation involved with some of the professions, and I understand that. I guess my concern is more on the dissemination of that information in terms of how we ensure that people, before they come to Manitoba,

have an understanding of what they will or will not be able to do in terms of their individual skills.

Is the department in its mandate with accreditation and apprenticeship working with Immigration? Maybe the minister could give me some specifics in terms of how it is working with Immigration to ensure that those people who are applying to come to Canada, whether it is under the Provincial Nominee Program or some other program, are made aware up front about what the expectations will be from them when they come here in terms of the trade that they hope to apply in Manitoba.

**Ms. McGifford:** Well, some of this information, of course, would have to be sought by the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan). I do understand that the Province is working through the Provincial Nominee Program to provide information up front before these individuals come to Canada. I am also aware that there is a qualifications recognition committee which is across government departments and is working on how to find the necessary pathways, so there are some processes in part, there are some processes in motion.

They may not be working absolutely perfectly. As the member indicates, there was some lack of information in his constituency. If he wishes more information, he can always of course speak through my office to my department and we will provide whatever help we can.

I am sure the member is aware, as well, that this is a very complex issue. One of the complexities is the association with the regulatory bodies. For example, the College of Physicians and Surgeons licenses physicians and surgeons. The member himself is probably familiar with the way this happens in the legal system. So, then, it is not something that any government necessarily has control over.

I understand that the federal government has been working arduously on this particular issue and it has also, I want to assure the member, been an issue of the Forum for Labour Market Ministers, of which I used to be a co-chair, so I should know what FLMM stands for.

We submitted a report, I think it was in October 2002, to the federal government and we are hoping that we will soon have a response. It would be a

document that I think I could share with the member opposite if he would wish.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Yes, I thank the minister. I would look forward to seeing that document.

More specifically, I guess, and I know the minister appreciates and I imagine she has a degree of compassion for people who come to Manitoba and then are alerted that they cannot use the skills that they thought they would be able to use.

While I appreciate the minister's offer to provide information to those individuals, I think their sense is that it is too late, that they should have been provided that information before they came to Manitoba.

So, more specifically, while I understand that a degree of this is more under the Immigration file, can the minister indicate, does her department work to provide information to potential immigrants, not people who are already here but people who are potentially immigrants in the recruitment process? Is the Department of Advanced Education involved in providing the information in terms of what qualifications people would need to be able to transfer, essentially, their skills to Manitoba?

\* (11:50)

**Ms. McGifford:** Well, I wanted to address the issue of sympathy and compassion because, yes I do, I am an immigrant, I was an immigrant and my parents were immigrants, so I do understand to some degree.

I mean we were, I suppose, fortunate in that our first language was English so there was not that challenge, although my husband comes from a Dutch-Polish family and they certainly faced challenges, my father-in-law being a welder, so yes I do know that in my own family. I do know what he is talking about.

As far as do we provide information directly to potential immigrants, we provide information to the Department of Labour and Immigration and work very closely with them in providing information. I think that one of the things the member should be aware of is that there are often private promoters, and I believe the federal government is now trying to control this whole private promoter business, but there are private promoters who make false promises

in the countries of origin and then folks come with certain expectations and they are not realized.

You probably remember your history lessons when people were promised streets would be paved with gold in the New World. Guess what? They were not. There is no reason to think that has not changed

But one of the initiatives within my department that, I think, is probably of interest to the member opposite because it would work hand-in-glove with recognizing credentials, and that is the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition initiative that we have been engaged in for some time and, indeed, are recognized as the national leaders on this file.

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition enables people to get credit for what they know rather than what they might have in their hand in terms of a piece of paper, and is very successful and we are very proud of the work that our department has done.

We have put \$3 million for the past three years into PLAR. Indeed, one of the individuals with us today, Louise Gordon, won something very special for her work in PLAR and I cannot quite remember what it was. We have another very well-known PLAR specialist in our department, Sandi Howell. I will just leave it at that.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I want to congratulate Louise for the award that she won, whatever it might have been. I will certainly take the minister's word that it was significant. I am sure that it was.

**An Honourable Member:** Recognition for what she had done.

**Mr. Goertzen:** It was recognition for what she had done. So I think that is commendable.

Just for the interest of the committee, I think what we will do with the time that we have remaining is I would like to ask questions about Manitoba Student Aid, some questions regarding Hydro Northern Training Initiatives, some questions regarding the potential floodway training initiatives and then Capital Grants. I know my colleague from Portage has some questions regarding Red River College.

**An Honourable Member:** And student aid.

**Mr. Goertzen:** And student aid. So that will take us, I think, to the end and then we will move these appropriations forward.

So let us move then to Manitoba Student Aid, if we could. Madam Minister, just in terms of Student Aid, if I recall correctly from last year's Estimates it must have been in September, there was a question posed by the member from River East, if memory serves me correctly, about students who had applied from rural communities and were asking for some type of relief or some type of exception, I guess, in their application because of the BSE crisis. Again, if memory serves me correctly, I think the minister indicated there were 10 or 12 at that time who had applied. Has that number changed at all?

**Ms. McGifford:** To the best of our knowledge, that has not changed and, of course, there is an appeal process if people feel that they have not acquired the funds that they need to undertake the work for that year.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the member for that and I think that is encouraging, that there has not been that need for appeal. Certainly I know that individuals affected by the crisis have had to appeal to other forms of aid. It is good that maybe it has not affected their ability to obtain education because we would not want those types of long-term impacts.

Related to page 55, it is indicated that there are three staff positions reduced under administrative support for Manitoba Student Aid. Again, I refer to a total reduction of four positions under Manitoba Student Aid and there is a note that says this is in support of the Government's commitment to affordability. Again, I know that was probably written by a Conservative or maybe came from one of our Conservative books previously, but can the minister indicate are those positions that remain unfilled from previous years or are they newly unfilled positions for this coming fiscal year?

**Ms. McGifford:** I am informed that they have been unfilled for quite a time. In other words, they are vacant positions.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Is there a sense from the minister that they are going to be eliminated as positions?

**Ms. McGifford:** We are going through an amalgamation process within the branch so we are

holding them back to see exactly what our needs will be as this process unfolds.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I will pose this question, I guess it is specific to the Manitoba Student Aid appropriation on page 55, but it is also more general to the department. I notice that in virtually every appropriation there is a greater allowance for staff turnover. In this particular appropriation there is an additional \$100,000 from 2003-2004. Maybe the minister could address both specifically, in this department, why there is the greater allowance but more generally, across the department, why that seems to be the case.

**Ms. McGifford:** We have increased it to reflect the reality of the historical vacancy pattern.

**Mr. Goertzen:** And that is the case not just for Manitoba Student Aid but across the department?

**Ms. McGifford:** Yes, that is true.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the minister for that response. In relation to Manitoba Student Aid, are there ongoing analysis surveys, studies done in terms of student satisfaction with their interaction with the Student Aid program?

**Ms. McGifford:** Indeed, and we are in the midst of process at this time.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Can I get an undertaking by the minister that she will provide, at the very least, a summary of the results of that survey when it is completed?

**Ms. McGifford:** Yes.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the minister for that undertaking. And as a note, and it is only a side note, I will say that in last Estimates I did with the Minister of Conservation at the time, I have still yet to receive the information that he promised to provide in September. So I know that my experience with this minister will be significantly better and restore my faith in the legislative process overall.

Can the minister indicate in terms of the amalgamation of the Student Loan Service Bureau and the Manitoba Student Aid program, was that a cost-neutral move for the Manitoba Student Aid overall or was it a cost-savings?

**Ms. McGifford:** I am informed that it was cost-neutral and driven by service.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I appreciate that and certainly service should be the overriding consideration in these types of moves when it comes to Manitoba Student Aid.

The next question is regarding, and maybe it falls under Student Aid maybe it does not, but, and this comes from somewhat of my own personal experience and the community that I represent.

A number of students, of course, commute from my community, the community of Steinbach and the surrounding area, in to university, whether it is the University of Manitoba or Red River community college or University of Winnipeg or other institutions for their education. I am assuming that there is a cost-recognition in terms of the Manitoba Student Aid program because students must put forward their expected costs.

\* (12:00)

But on a government basis, is there, or maybe there are programs that exist that I am not aware of, whether it is a tax credit program or something other than that, a consideration of the additional costs that out-of-town students have to pay for their education?

**Ms. McGifford:** Yes, it is considered in the needs assessment.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Okay, so that is what I understood to believe to be true. I have to say that I was fortunate during my experience in university, the two jobs that I worked throughout my university career were able to pay for my costs of education and boarding, so I do not have intimate knowledge of the Student Aid program, though I have intimate knowledge of working long hours.

The question, then, is more specific to government policy. Has there been any examination about what the Government might look at doing, quite aside from Student Aid, in terms of providing tax credits or some type of recognition that students who live outside of the general area that the institution is located in might be provided?

**Ms. McGifford:** Well, the member is aware that we are encouraging on-line learning through Campus Manitoba or other forms of education, so that is one

possibility. The other thing, of course, is our \$6.3 million bursary which offsets student loans.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I am going to turn it over to my colleague from Portage to ask questions related to Manitoba Student Aid, I understand. But I do simply want to say that, clearly, while tuition is kind of the lightning rod for students in terms of what gets attention and the media provides attention, sometimes what is lost in that are the additional costs that are borne by students who are out of the general catchment area of the university and who, like myself, at one point had to take up alternative lodging or incur the costs of commuting, which, according to today's gas prices, are just simply getting more and more expensive.

With those comments, if the minister wants to respond, she certainly can. If not, I will turn it over to my colleague from Portage la Prairie.

**Ms. McGifford:** Well, I think we are all aware that students who come from outside learning centres and attend a post-secondary institution have the burden of additional costs. This is, of course, one of the driving factors behind the creation of the University College of the North because we believed it was important to make education more accessible, and we continue to believe it is important to make it more accessible. Again, this is one of the reasons for the \$6.3-million bursary which we are using to control the amount of money that a student has under a student loan. It has been very effective because I have mentioned that our student loan uptake is, I believe, among the lowest, if not the lowest, in the country.

**Mr. David Faurchou (Portage la Prairie):** I appreciate the opportunity to be here this morning. I know the minister understands that education is a passion of mine, and I believe very much that one garners their future based upon the education that they are able to garner. So it is vitally important, and I do want to recognize the minister and her department's advances of increased support for post-secondary education here in the province of Manitoba which, again, is seeing an increase with this budget's passage a couple of weeks ago.

I want to ask, in regard to the student loans program, and the minister alluded to the low uptake of our student loan program here, I have personal experience with two youngsters in our family now in

university, and the inability to access the student loans program. I will give you the example, if one is a farmer or in a business example or a small corner store owner, would you continually, even though you have an income from those operations, you re-invest those monies to keep your business going. You are always improving it because, ultimately, if you do not grow, you are going to see your business falter in the future.

This criterion of evaluation when you are looking at small individual proprietor-owned businesses making you ineligible for the student loans program and your young people are curtailed in their educational opportunities, because I, personally, and the corner store operator, we find it extraordinary difficult, and this coming year, I will be as honest about it, that one of our individuals will have to stay home because I just cannot afford to have both in university at this point in time. Yet my income is at a point that they are ineligible for student loans because of this situation that I think needs address.

*Madam Chairperson in the Chair*

**Ms. McGifford:** The member might remember that there was a federal announcement, I believe, earlier this year. Part of the budget speech in which the federal government announced that they are modifying the rules and what not for accessing student loans. I am sure the member will be encouraged to hear that.

**Mr. Faurchou:** I would like to ask the minister in regard to the scholarship program and bursary initiative, this is the line that issues resources to entities such as MMF, Manitoba Métis Federation, for dispersal at campuses, university and college. You are aware that the criteria of disbursement of those scholarship and bursary monies really differs greatly by organization as to the criteria. I am wondering whether the minister is wanting to consider putting forward some standardized criteria. I speak very specifically of a young lady out of Portage la Prairie whose family is probably one of the most affluent in the area, totally eligible for MMF funding, and yet they probably have more resources than 90 percent of persons in and about my constituency. The waiting and the criteria to which the general population of Manitoba is evaluated by is not a consideration in regard to other funding agencies which the Province supports.

**Ms. McGifford:** I believe that the member is referring to the MSBI, the Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative. The Province puts \$5 million into this fund, and it is matched by the institution. Since it is matched by the institutions that match, no, we are not in a position to tell them what their criteria are. In fact, they evolve their own criteria. However, I believe we have in recent history been able to exert a little bit of influence, which has enabled less fortunate students to receive more money. I think that that was something that we undertook about a couple of years ago. But also the member needs to realize that sometimes the donors who match this money have criteria attached, and since these are the communities donating money, of course we have to respect their wishes for their donations.

No, I would not want to phone David Chartrand and tell him how to hand out MMF money. I think I would get myself into a lot of trouble. However, if I have a conversation with him, as we do, I can certainly ask what his feelings are about MMF money to students, but I think it would have to be done very respectfully. Of course it would be done respectfully.

\* (12:10)

**Madam Chairperson:** The honourable Member for Lakeside, or Steinbach.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Thank you, and Lakeside is a beautiful community and an equally Conservative community as Steinbach.

I wonder if the minister could indicate, and she mentioned in her opening address, I am glad that she did, about the training initiative that will be underway for the floodway initiative. Can she indicate what stage that is at, the type of training that is being looked at, and just exactly where we are in that process?

**Ms. McGifford:** I am sure the member will not be surprised to hear that we are waiting until we get the Wally Fox-Decent report. However, I can tell him that most of the work that will be done will involve earth moving. So it will involve training people who operate equipment to remove earth.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I am not surprised. Certainly, we all are waiting with bated breath for Mr. Fox-Decent. We are not certain what has become of that report,

but we are certain that it will be coming sometime soon. I know that is not the minister's responsibility. But there was, of course, a reference on page 81 to the Floodway Training Initiative, and the minister noted it as well in her comment about the initiatives undertaken. I am certain that some discussions have taken place or it would not have appeared in the Estimates. I appreciate the fact that it is for, largely, heavy earth-moving. Is the training component specific to the nature of the work or will it be specific to individuals, for example, those who might have less opportunity in the workforce?

**Ms. McGifford:** I am advised that our training will be focussed on under-represented groups in the labour market, particularly Aboriginal people, and I believe that there have been preliminary discussions on this training and how it will develop. If I might just add, we are also talking about co-funding the training and having these groups co-fund the training with us, which is always a good idea.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I will assume that the minister, when she talks about the partnership or discussions as ongoing, she is talking about discussions with the industry who might be involved with the construction of the expansion of the floodway.

**Ms. McGifford:** Well, again, I have to refer to the Wally Fox-Decent report; apparently the discussions that were taking place have temporarily abated whilst we await the Wally Fox-Decent report. Once the report has been presented, we hope to have discussions involving employers, labour folks, and also the under-represented groups.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Could the minister indicate the abatement of the discussions, is that because the nature of the discussions would change depending on whether or not there was a project labour agreement in place?

**Ms. McGifford:** I understand that the project labour agreement would be very important in asserting that the discussions are more formal than they have been to date, whilst I cited to the member that they had been informal. There is one other point. If there were this agreement, we would want to make sure that our under-represented groups, the targets were built into the arrangement.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Were the previous discussions in form or otherwise, were they taking place under the

assumption that there would be a labour agreement in place?

**Ms. McGifford:** I am advised that, no, that is not the case. They were very informal, and, no, they did not deal with that.

**Mr. Goertzen:** In the interest of time I will move on to Hydro training initiative, and I know the minister has provided the previous critic some information regarding that so some of the areas would be covered off. By the information that she has provided, I may at some point ask for updated information, and I expect that the minister would be as forthcoming with me as she was with the previous critic, which, I know, was appreciated.

On page 69 of the appropriation, this will not come as any surprise to the minister, if she could provide more information on the additional \$250,000 the fees and services on behalf of citizens that are put out into the appropriation.

**Ms. McGifford:** I am told that, with this specific 250, 125 is from the enabling vote and 125 is from Aboriginal and Northern Affairs and that this is part of the \$10 million that Government is putting forth to participate as a partner in the pre-project training.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Will the minister just undertake to provide me with some information in terms of how many individuals are currently partaking of the training in anticipation of the hydro projects, what the nature of that training is, and the status of their training, if they have already graduated from some particular program or they are already working on a hydro project or they are working elsewhere with that training. Could she just provide that information to me at a later date?

**Ms. McGifford:** Yes, I think, given the details the member wishes, that is the best way of dealing with that.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Moving on to the capital grants appropriation of the Estimates, could the minister indicate for my information, how the universities go about applying for these monies? Do they put forward a prioritized list of what they are looking for to the council or elsewhere, and would that also include institutions that are private in nature, like CMU, or the Steinbach Bible College, or Providence Bible College?



**Ms. McGifford:** Yes, they put forth a priority list, and then Government Services goes out and vets the situation.

**Mr. Goertzen:** And that would include institutions like Steinbach Bible College and CMU, or do they fall under some sort of different agreement?

**Ms. McGifford:** No government has ever given money to the institutions that the member has cited.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Is that because they do not qualify for the funding or that is just how things have gone?

**Ms. McGifford:** I am informed that it has never been part of the arrangement; it was not in the past, was not with the past government and is not a part of the arrangement with the current government.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Can the minister indicate the priority list that the institutions put forward? Is that documentation accessible to the public?

**Ms. McGifford:** If I might, I think this is another one of those situations where we would have to speak with the institutions and make certain that they would support releasing this information.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Then I will accept the minister's undertaking if someone in her department could contact the institutions to see which ones would be agreeable to release that information. If only one or two are agreeable, that would be fine. We would take one or two, whoever is available or willing to provide that information. I wonder if the minister could indicate, I know the Capital Grants line has increased over the previous year, but that seems to be as a result of the increased funding to deal with the situation at Keewatin and the Thompson campus, but otherwise, it looks like the Capital Grants have decreased year over year for universities. Is that because there was less of an application for the money?

**Ms. McGifford:** No, it is not that the universities suggested they needed less money. It was part of the difficulty in balancing the Budget this year. We do not want to spend money that we do not have, and so we have not.

\* (12:20)

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, I suppose we could spend a great deal of time talking about whether or not the Government has spent money that they do not have, but I have made a commitment to the minister and to staff to move these appropriations forward. I do not want to start off my time with the minister by breaking my word. As the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) indicates, I am truly a man who keeps my word, so with that I think we should move forward on the moving of the appropriations.

**Madam Chairperson:** Resolution 44.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$377,327,700 for Advanced Education and Training, Support for Universities and Colleges, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 44.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$51,247,600 for Advanced Education and Training, Manitoba Student Aid, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 44.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$92,869,100 for Advanced Education and Training, Training in Continuing Education, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 44.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$18,549,500 for Advanced Education and Training, Capital Grants, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 44.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,282,100 for Advanced Education and Training, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

***Resolution agreed to.***

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of the Department of Advanced Education and

Training is Item 1.(a) Minister's Salary, \$29,400 contained in Resolution 44.1.

At this point we request that minister's staff leave the table for the consideration of this item.

**Mr. Faurschou:** We do have a couple of minutes left and I want to ask the minister, in what line in the Estimates process would be appropriations for initiatives such as Campus Manitoba or satellite activity of Assiniboine Community College and Red River College?

**Ms. McGifford:** As far as exactly what line it is in the Estimates book I will have to find that out from our financial person but I know that Campus Manitoba is funded through the Council on Post-Secondary Education.

**Mr. Faurschou:** I appreciate the minister's staff has left the table so I will just leave the minister with a couple of thoughts and perhaps they can be entertained at a later date either through correspondence or by meeting. That is the consideration of further initiatives in this area because there are programs that are available to school divisions that I will use the example of Winkler, Garden Valley, with the Red River satellite campuses, they are essentially the provider of the programming for home health care aides. So, through the vocational-type training programs and options through the high school, Senior 1 through Senior 4, persons once achieving their Senior 4 level are coming with the credentials that provide opportunity just to write the examination, and they have their accreditation.

I believe this is a model which should be able to be extended but all the resources have been left to be guarded from the school divisions. Yet I believe this is an extraordinarily cost-effective way of delivering this type of educational programming into the rural areas, where we really, truly need persons like health care aides, home care aides, other apprenticeship-type jobs, careers, and so I leave that with the minister.

**Madam Chairperson:** Resolution 44.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$645,400 for Advanced Education and Training, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

**Resolution agreed to.**

That concludes the Estimates of the Department of Advanced Education and Training. What is the will of the committee?

**Some Honourable Members:** Committee rise.

**Madam Chairperson:** Committee rise.

## INDUSTRY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND MINES

\* (10:00)

**Mr. Chairperson (Conrad Santos):** Will the Committee of Supply come to order, please. This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Industry, Economic Development and Mines. Will the minister's staff please enter the Chamber.

We are on page 103 of the Estimates book. The table is now open for questions.

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** Just a couple of questions and the Liberal Party would like to ask a couple as well. Before I turn the floor over to them and we get into the voting process, I was just wondering if the minister could outline how the status of the New Flyer MIOP loan is with the new ownership. Are there any changes or updates that he could give the House?

**Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines):** I can identify to the member opposite that the status of the conditions is being maintained. It is virtually the same as it was prior to the purchase by the new corporation.

**Mr. Eichler:** I do have a concern with that, and I was wondering if the minister could elaborate on why once a company has been sold, that loan would be transferred and day-to-day operations would be paid off. There was a huge profit made by the previous ownership and yet the debt was not repaid and transferred on. It is a concern I have, and I was wondering if the minister could elaborate on that, Mr. Chairman?

**Mr. Smith:** It was part and parcel of the refinancing package that the new company had evolved within the purchase of the company. The Province of

Manitoba believes that they have a very secure investment with the company in the assistance on the package of the refinancing. It, quite frankly, does not hinder or cost the Province of Manitoba anything. The company that has bought it is very reputable, very strong in background with a good history of expansion and, quite frankly, it is a loan that is quite secure. The Province of Manitoba believes it is part of the restructuring of the package. It was needed to complete the transaction, and we feel it is quite secure and fully support it.

**Mr. Eichler:** The Palliser family, have there been any further developments on the MIOP program there?

**Mr. Smith:** That has been completed and we have come to an arrangement with Palliser. It is progressing quite well.

**Mr. Eichler:** Could the minister outline are there any changes that have happened with the Ottawa office since his appointment to the office?

**Mr. Smith:** That office has been transferred to Intergovernmental Affairs. We do have a joint arrangement with New Brunswick that we have with that office in cost sharing.

**Mr. Eichler:** I will turn it over to the Liberals for a few questions, and if there is time, I would like to go back into a couple of other questions, if time being.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** The minister is responsible for the Emergency Expenditures, and I note in looking at the pattern of emergency expenditures which were \$25 million in 2000 and 2001, and then up to \$38 million, and then \$34 million, and then \$93 million, and the Estimate this year is \$25 million. It would appear based on the sort of average of the last four years that is probably a low number. Can the minister justify the number?

**Mr. Smith:** Yes, we believe in the Estimates that the number is well justified. The number, as the member mentions, goes up and down from year to year. Emergencies are something that, if the member had a crystal ball or I had a crystal ball, I guess you would be able to say exactly what that number might be. They come in a lot of different forms and from a lot of different ways but certainly on a running average the 25 million, we believe, is a number that is quite

justified and does represent a running average over the last period of time.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Well I think that is just my point. If you look at the last four years, it is nowhere near the running average, but I would say particularly this year when, you know, the BSE situation is still not resolved and the budgeting or being prepared for circumstances like additional expenditures in the area of the dealing with the BSE situation is certainly a potential possibility.

**Mr. Smith:** Yes, the possibility has happened in B.C. Obviously, when they put numbers in, when all provinces put their numbers in on an average, the numbers can go up and down. Last year was an incredible anomaly, and there is a number that is not reflective of an average year by any sort. Certainly, when you do look at numbers, when you take special warrant dollars that are needed for recovery of large expenditures, B.C. as well as Manitoba had historic years in costs on forest fires. The federal government came to play with British Columbia, and I would hope Manitoba as well is successful in our efforts to have the federal government identify just how drastic the forest fire season was here for the province of Manitoba, and recognize the incredible expenditures that we did have protecting our province.

\* (10:10)

The numbers in 2000-2001 were actual expenditures, \$24,400. Years going up until now excluding this year ran around the \$35-million range. Certainly, years prior, we had years as low as \$3.8 million on expenditures, years with \$15.7, some years with \$8 million and quite frankly, on a running average and on a long-term basis, the numbers that are projected of \$25 million are right in the average.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I would give the minister one more opportunity with regard to rejections, whether there may be any needs with regard to emergency expenditures related to the BSE situation. I would also ask the minister, I note that this includes environmental responses and what type of environmental responses have been covered in the past.

**Mr. Smith:** The member may or may not know that each individual department does, in fact, budget for responses out of their departments. Agriculture, obviously does, Conservation with the environmental side obviously does. When you get an anomaly

where they exceed their budget or go past their budget, it kicks into Emergency Measures and this department, Firdale being an example and others where it is a large expenditure, again an anomaly, and this department picks up after those departments' expenditures are exceeded.

**Mr. Gerrard:** My interpretation of the numbers provided this year is that the Government is not expecting to have to make any emergency expenditures related to BSE, given the size of the number. I would also ask that you follow up on my question related to environmental responses and the types that are included.

**Mr. Smith:** Again I would mention to the member opposite that interdepartmental expenditures are budgeted within departments. Obviously, it is not targeted to any one project or any one thing. Dollars that are accessible could be in cases of many types of emergencies or any types of situations that are out there. It is not specifically designed for one target area.

**Mr. Gerrard:** What types of environmental emergencies have there been in the past that required expenditures as documented on page 73 of the Estimates?

**Mr. Smith:** The types of things could be a good long list. We can get the member a list of the types of things that they could be for or go to, but certainly Firdale chemical spills and spills of a large magnitude that other departments, as I mentioned before, are not able to address through their budget. It comes in various different forms. It is anything that is detrimental to the environment. It could be many forms of chemicals and Firdale is a good example.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I am going to pass things over to my colleague, the MLA for Inkster. but from what you are telling me, it would it appear you are returning to the 2000 and 2001 base levels. There is no margin built in, in case there is further need for emergency expenditures related to BSE. I will just make that point and pass it over to the MLA for Inkster.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** I just had a couple of brief questions regarding the PNP program. There is an entrepreneur component to it. I did listen to the minister's opening remarks where he made reference to it. As I say, a couple of quick

questions. What stream would the entrepreneur part of the program fall into with the changes that were announced a couple of weeks ago?

**Mr. Smith:** It is a separate category, a separate stream. If the member could be more specific on exactly what he is looking for, I am not quite certain what his question is.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** In terms of the issuing out a PNP certificate, is it then the department that does the review or do they hand it over to the Department of Immigration to review the actual application?

**Mr. Smith:** It is a committee from both departments. You have the Department of Labour and you have our department that reviews the applications and then, after the applications are reviewed, it is then forwarded on to the federal government.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** What would be a typical time period from the moment that someone would make application, a waiting period? How long does it take for them once they enter in saying, look, we would like to become an entrepreneur in the province? What sort of a time period does that take?

**Mr. Smith:** The process, on our side, on the provincial side, from initiation in most cases is approximately two months, depending on the complexity, give or take a little bit of time, two months is the average. Once it goes from the provincial side to the federal review side it can vary, depending on which country the application is for. In some countries it is a shorter period of time. For instance, China is a longer period of time under the federal review for a multitude of whatever the federal reason may be.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** So that I am understanding correctly, what you are talking about when you talk the federal point of view, that is just like any other immigration application, so in the Philippines, you are looking at a year and other countries you might be looking at three months. I understand that process. There is no other process.

Your department then looks at it in co-operation with the Department of Labour. After they review it and if they feel that it qualifies, they give them a provincial certificate. That certificate then is issued to the appropriate embassy. That embassy then takes

a period of time in order to process it. A fair assessment in terms of what takes place?

\* (10:20)

**Mr. Smith:** That would be a fair assessment.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Let us say, if you have someone from the Philippines that has \$300,000, they say, "Look, we would like to become an entrepreneur in the province of Manitoba." How would you recommend that they should proceed?

**Mr. Smith:** Generally, initially, it would be on an exploratory visit. The folks would come and after that time present a proposal to the Province on the specifics of the business that they are considering, and then there would be an application and form made after that time.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Is that a different application than the normal PNP application that one would receive and, if so, could I be provided a copy of that application? This is going to be the last question I was going to ask in regards to it. If the minister could provide me, I know Mr. Clement from the Immigration Department has been exceptionally co-operative and helpful with me in terms of understanding the program. If there is an individual from within the department, if I had do have a constituent or if I am aware of an individual who I could actually make contact with, I would appreciate to know who it is, if I should do that.

**Mr. Smith:** We would be more than happy to make sure that the member gets the applications and can see the information. In fact, we will put together part of what the process is, as we see it, and put it in writing for him to follow and get that information to him as soon as possible.

**Mr. Eichler:** Just maybe turn the table a little bit and talk about the controversial Internet pharmacies and the idea of the pharmacies making a shortage on the drugs that are being sold in Canada. Is the department looking at any changes to maybe limit the Internet pharmacy as far as expansion? Are there going to be any cutbacks in that field?

**Mr. Smith:** As we know and the member knows, it is certainly driven by entrepreneurs here in the province of Manitoba and has been quite successful. The start of the Internet pharmacies, really, in

Manitoba was in a lot of the rural areas in Manitoba by a group of, in most cases, younger people that are pharmacists that have started up, decided to live in rural areas.

It has been critically important from the industry side to connect Manitoba and have the linkages and I think the Internet pharmacy is a good example of what we will see in a lot of cases in a lot of areas. It crosses a lot of departments, obviously. It is something that the Internet Pharmacists association with the pharmacists of Manitoba and certainly the Canadian Pharmacists Association have been working on, looking at potential regulation for the industry.

In case of shortages of drugs, in every single case, it has been investigated by Health and found not to be Internet pharmacists that have caused any shortages. You will get shortages historically in Manitoba with different types of drugs, but specifically to Internet pharmacists, that has not been the case, it has not been identified and, certainly, the federal minister has identified and reflected that view.

The industry itself is something that is obviously monitored, it is controlled. They followed every regulation that is out there, in fact, enhanced the system in some cases with the supply of drugs and the ability to access drugs at different times. The demand for the service is something that I think the member opposite is well aware of, as I am aware of, supply and demand. As long as people are staying within regulated rules that are presently out there, it is something that I believe that young entrepreneurs, or entrepreneurs of any age for that matter, will continue to drive. It is something that I believe will probably expand.

From Manitoba's standpoint, we have had assurances from the industry and from the association that Manitoba will be first. There will be no shortage of supplies in any case for drugs in Manitoba. They have certainly accomplished that working with all the associations in the medical community and I believe that the safety of drugs is certainly a priority and important. That has been maintained. The supply of drugs is safe and that has been maintained. I believe that through the different avenues that they have they will work out any problems any parts of the industry might have, as happens with any industry that is out there. Manitoba

is, certainly, proud of the achievements that they have made. From the health side we have seen no shortage and safety and security of drugs have been maintained. The cost structure of drugs has not seen any significant increase in costing or pricing here for Manitobans and I believe that, moving ahead, it will probably be like most other businesses and start-up businesses. I guess I can look back to the years of the Industrial Revolution, where people felt that machines were going to replace and be the detriment of society. I believe the Internet is probably going to see this in many forms, in many ways, and this is one of them.

**Mr. Eichler:** I guess due to the time constraints we are under, I have a number more questions but I am sure the minister would be happy to meet with me on an out-of-House basis. So maybe we should go ahead and proceed with the voting on the expenditures, Mr. Chairperson.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Resolution 10.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$15,293,400 for Industry, Economic Development and Mines, Business Services, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 10.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$8,254,400 for Industry, Economic Development and Mines, Mineral Resources, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 10.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,656,300 for Industry, Economic Development and Mines, Community and Economic Development, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 10.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,627,700 for Industry, Economic Development and Mines, Emergency Measures Organization, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 10.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding

\$166,700 for Industry, Economic Development and Mines, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

***Resolution agreed to.***

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of the Department of Industry, Economic Development and Mines is item 10.1.(a) Minister's Salary contained in Resolution 10.1. Any debate on the matter?

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Accordingly, Resolution 10.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,476,000 for Industry, Economic Development and Mines, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

***Resolution agreed to.***

This concludes the Estimates for this Department of Industry, Economic Development and Mines.

The next set of Estimates that will be considered by this section of the committee is the Estimates of the Department of Labour and Immigration.

Shall we recess briefly to allow the minister and critic the opportunity to prepare for the commencement of the next set of Estimates?  
[Agreed]

*The committee recessed at 10:30 a.m.*

*The committee resumed at 10:33 a.m.*

**LABOUR AND IMMIGRATION**

**Mr. Chairperson (Conrad Santos):** Will the Committee of Supply come to order, please. This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Labour and Immigration.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement to make?

**Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** Yes, I do, Mr. Chairperson.

It is an honour to be the minister of this very diversified portfolio. It is one of the smallest but it really packs a punch and does a lot of work that affects Manitobans, and I would like to note the excellent work done by the department staff and thank them for their dedication in providing high quality services to the citizens of Manitoba. I also want to thank the members of the department's external advisory committees and boards for their expert advice and assistance on important policy matters.

The 2004-2005 total budget for the Department of Labour and Immigration is just over \$29.1 million. This request represents an increase of 2.5 percent from last year's adjusted vote. Most of the increase is allocated to increasing immigration to Manitoba, an important priority for the Government and represents an 8.4% increase to the Immigration and Multiculturalism division's budget. Setting aside Immigration and Multiculturalism the department's total budget request actually represents a modest reduction of 1 percent. A revenue recovery of about 61 percent of the departmental budget is projected for 2004-2005.

Immigration and Multiculturalism division. Last year immigration to Manitoba increased by 40 percent and we are expecting another 40% increase for this year, which puts us well on our way to reaching our target of 10 000 immigrants per year. Manitoba Provincial Nominee landings doubled in 2003 accounting for 50 percent of all of our province's immigrants.

Mr. Chairperson, 31 percent of Provincial Nominee applicants and their families settled in communities outside of Winnipeg. The Provincial Nominee Program has been redesigned so that applicants who have the strongest potential for success can be processed more quickly. Applicants with strong connections to Manitoba such as family members of residence or those who have attended one of our schools, colleges or universities will be given extra consideration in their nomination assessment.

Along with an enhanced Provincial Nominee Program we will continue to support the policies of family reunification and the protection and resettlement of refugees. Funding to the Immigration and Multiculturalism division was increased from \$10.4 million to \$11.3 million. This includes

approximately \$7 million for the Manitoba Immigrant Integration Program. We have improved the delivery of labour market support programs in Brandon, Steinbach and Winkler as well as Winnipeg. We are also continuing to work with partners on a qualifications recognition strategy to ensure the faster integration of highly skilled immigrants into occupations for which they have training and experience.

Status of Women. One of the Government's priorities is to provide more efficient services to the public. As part of this commitment the Status of Women was added to the Department of Labour and Immigration. Many of the department's programs and policies affect the status of women such as pensions, employment standards with compassionate care leave as an example.

Violence in the Workplace and Immigration. The addition of status of women will result in synergies and the opportunity to built capacity in providing services. The Manitoba Women's Advisory Council brings women's issues and concerns to the attention of the Manitoba Government to ensure the full and equal participation of women in society. The council will continue to operate as an autonomous advisory body in fulfilling this responsibility.

I am pleased to advise that Ms. Crystal Laborero has been appointed as the new chair of the Manitoba Women's Advisory Council. She brings with her a wealth of experience which includes her work as the director of the Aboriginal Employment Initiative with the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce. I would proudly add that Ms. Laborero is the first Aboriginal woman to serve as the chair of this important advisory council.

The council participated in the launch of a forum on women's social justice issues in February 2004, which may become an annual event. The council's publication such as the weekly *Council Currents* and the *Parenting on Your Own* handbook that has been distributed to 27 000 single parents and service providers are valuable in not only providing information but also in raising the profile of women's concerns.

The Manitoba Women's Directorate will continue to operate as a distinct entity to ensure that the unique needs and concerns of women are

integrated in policy, legislation and programs. A recent publication, *Workplaces that Work: Creating a Workplace Culture that Attracts, Retains and Promotes Women* encourages employers to create more opportunities for greater access for women in high-growth, high-paying occupations.

The directorate is also working with partners in Adult Education and Continuing Education to offer the Power Up program on a more permanent basis in providing computer and Internet skills training for women.

In January 2004, the directorate launched the Domestic Violence Prevention: A Workplace Initiative. This initiative encourages employers to help their employees get the help they need to break the cycle of violence and to help their customers and clients recognize the signs of domestic violence. The directorate is participating in a working group to advise the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) of a strategy to provide comprehensive maternal and new-born care to women throughout Manitoba.

Workplace Safety and Health. Manitoba's time-loss injury rate decreased from a high of 5.8 injuries per 100 workers in 2000 to a preliminary figure of 4.8 in 2003, which is the lowest injury rate over the past 10 years. From 2000 to 2003 the injury rate declined by 17 percent. The Government is continuing the SAFE Work public awareness campaign, with the newest television ad launched on April 28. This is the first of a trilogy of ads that tells a connected story, a new worker going to the first day of work, the supervisor's reaction to a fatality and the action that the CEO of the company is prepared to take. The ad's message emphasizes worker and employer responsibility for safety. We are continuing to work with partners to implement the recommendations of the Workplace Safety and Health committee.

Mechanical and Engineering Branch. In 2003-2004, the Mechanical and Engineering Branch conducted over 20 000 inspections and issued over 3000 licenses to gasfitters, power engineers, electricians and welders. The Mechanical and Engineering Branch is partnered with Red River College and Assiniboine Community College to establish a new commercial gasfitter course that began on May 1, and to train second-class power engineers to meet a shortage of workers in this occupation.

The Pension Commission. The Pension Commission undertook the first major review since 1983 of The Pension Benefits Act, including the release of a consultation paper and public hearings to obtain feedback from pension plan sponsors and our participants, the pension industry, and other stakeholders. The commission's final report was made available on-line on the commission's Web site and comments were accepted up to March 31, 2004. These comments will be considered as we proceed with our review in legislation.

Employment Standards Division. The Labour Adjustment unit assists workers and employers who are facing job cuts or closures in an industry through joint consultative labour-management adjustment committees. A worker adjustment committee manual was designed this year to assist committee members through the labour adjustment process.

\* (10:40)

The Worker Advisor Office provides advice and representation to injured workers who request assistance with their workers in compensation claims. To provide very efficient service, a new claim tracking data base was designed to offer more comprehensive and up-to-date information to clients and the branch.

The Employments Standards Division core mandate is balanced and timely resolution of workplace disputes. The division is responsible for ensuring compliance in over 33 000 businesses in excess of 500 000 employees that fall within provincial jurisdiction. The average yearly service levels are amazing: 130 000 telephone requests for information; 10 000 walk-ins to central and regional offices; 3500 formal investigations conducted; 90 percent of investigations resolved without formal action; 55 percent of claims are resolved by quick resolution through facilitation of intake staff; 35 percent of claims are voluntarily resolved through facilitation of a field officer.

Conciliation and Mediation Services branch during the 2003-2004 fiscal year, 95 percent of conciliation assignments were completed without work stoppages. The success rate for joint grievance mediation assignments was 99 percent, and 78 percent for expedited grievance mediation or arbitration cases. The Manitoba Labour Board during the last fiscal year, 898 new cases, a 6% increase



from the previous year, were filed with the Manitoba Labour Board. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Chairperson:** We thank the honourable minister for those comments. Does the honourable official opposition critic have any comments to make?

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield):** Yes, Mr. Chairman, since being appointed the official Labour critic back in 1999, we have seen the NDP government deteriorate labour relations in this province, culminating with the forced unionization of the floodway, the calamity we see right now. We have seen how former Minister Becky Barrett bungled her way from one issue to another. There was an intermediate stay of the former minister from Thompson, and he was there not long enough for us to actually judge where he was going to go with the department. Since then, we have seen this minister continue down the path of payoff to union bosses, punishing workers and giving an incredible unease to the business community.

We have also seen that the government of the day is clearly very concerned with the amount of people leaving Manitoba, and has grasped onto a program, a very good program, the immigration program that was established under the Filmon Conservatives. To the credit of the NDP, they have taken the program and what they are trying to do is backfill people leaving the province with new immigrants and at least there is one success, even though it is built on what the Conservatives started.

Clearly, we need immigrants, we need them for the province. They bring a lot of new ideas, they bring a lot of new energies. We also need them for the manufacturing sector. Unfortunately, we are seeing on the other side Manitobans fleeing in great numbers which brings us to the point of the Manitoba Immigration Council. Clearly, the Government has to do something to stem the flow of people leaving Manitoba, in particular, new immigrants. This cannot be a place where they come in, get to understand how the culture of Canada works and then move on to other places.

There are a lot of issues that we want to cover off during the Estimates process. The Department of Labour and the minister is right, it is not a big financial budget item in the entire budget. Yet it really does have an incredible amount of clout on the

economy. With this Government and its poor handling of the portfolio, it is to the detriment of Manitoba. So, clearly, we want to spend some time going through various issues whether it is the way the minister has been handling labour relations. For instance, whether it is with The Pension Freedom Act, this Government clearly has shown that it is slipping back into its traditional role that government knows best. It is proving once again that the democratic part in the new party is an oxymoron. That it is actually a direct contradiction to what they believe in. This is what you have got to do, and not about individual freedoms which, clearly, as New Democrats, is something they loathe.

We look forward to dealing with our various components. I know the Fire Commissioner's office will have a few questions there. We look forward to beginning the process of the Estimates process in the Department of Labour and Immigration.

If there is leave of the committee, I would like to also pass on an opportunity to the Member for Inkster, the unofficial Labour critic, and if you would canvass the House, certainly on this I would be prepared to give the member a few moments to make a couple of opening remarks.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Mr. Chairperson, I had asked if it would be favourable to have leave so that I could give an opening statement.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Is there leave that the Member for Inkster have a few comments to make? *[Agreed]*

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Thank you, Mr. Chairperson and members, for allowing me to say a few words prior to it getting underway.

This is an area, an interest that I have in many ways and whether it is Labour or Immigration, this is probably one of the departments in which there is going to be a little bit of controversy over the next little while as we anticipate certain decisions coming down the pipe. The minister definitely has not shied away from some of that controversy. We saw a sample of it yesterday in terms of the whole pension debate. The NDP in Saskatchewan doing one thing, saying we have faith in our seniors in their ability to make decisions, to Ontario, which is saying in a more limited way but at least acknowledging that there are other needs that could be met through pensions, and we have the socialistic Big Brother

attitude of what appears to be this Government's approach, saying we can spend your money, as the member from Springfield has pointed out, a whole lot better than you can, so we do not want you to touch your money that you have invested and definitely establishing a double standard.

Then we could go on to the floodway. I, for one, cannot understand how this particular minister can justly say that she represents all the workers in the province of Manitoba, both unionized and non-union members, given this Government's position on the floodway, saying that if you are not a union member you are not going to be able to work on the floodway. I just think that that is a terrible attitude, a terrible message, that we have provided the Minister of Labour the opportunity to express her dissatisfaction on this issue. But what has become apparent is that this is a Minister of Labour that represents only unionized workers. To say that she does not would be wrong, just based on the floodway policy.

On the immigration point, there have been some very positive things happening in there. I am glad to see the number of streams that have been established. I think the additional resources is another positive thing. We look forward to us hitting a target of 10 000. I must say that the 10 000 target is something which could have been achieved earlier, as the member from Springfield pointed out. This is a program that was signed a number of years. It was the former administration that actually entered into the agreement with the then-Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien. There is no reason why we could not be at 10 000 today. When you want to have the higher numbers is when the economy is doing relatively well. It is a whole lot easier to sustain. Public acceptance of it would be that much greater, and ultimately not only would the social fabric of the province be enhanced by it but I would also suggest to you that the economy would even be doing better. So, yes, they have done some positive things in recent months in regard to that area, but we still look for improvement.

\* (10:50)

Then we have Bill 9, The Manitoba Immigration Council Act. I truly do believe that this is a political bill that the minister is proposing. I can understand the need for a council. If the minister really wanted to do a service to Manitobans in regard to Bill 9, she will make amendments that would allow for other

organizations, whether it is the Law Society or other groups, to be able to provide those names. The last thing I want to see is a list of names recommended by this particular minister that is strictly based on are you a member of our party, or to what degree are you going to commit to supporting us in government, as opposed to putting Manitobans and immigrants first. With those few words, I thank the members for their patience.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Under Manitoba practice, the last item that the Committee of Supply is the item on the Minister's Salary contained in 11.1.(a). Accordingly, we shall proceed with the item in 11.—

### Point of Order

**An Honourable Member:** Point of order.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Point of order being raised?

**Mr. Schuler:** Yes, this being a committee and not being the Chamber, de facto we are just holding committee in the Chamber, I would like to ask my colleague from Inkster if he would come down to the front row. This is viewed as a committee and I would like to ask the member if he would take a seat down here so that we can confer back and forth when he wishes to ask his questions.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Okay. The rule is this. Section 773, while the Committee of Supply, the minister presenting his or her Estimates and the critic or critics of the minister's department shall be permitted to speak from a place in the front row in the benches of the Chamber.

This is the rule, the minister and the critic. He is not a critic officially. The Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) is. It is not even a recognized party. There have to be four members for the party to be recognized as the other opposition party. The member technically is not. That is the answer to the point of order being raised, so there is no violation of the rule.

However, if there is unanimous consent, we can waive the rules of the House and the rules of the Chamber. Is there consent, unanimously? *[Agreed]* There is unanimous consent and the member can sit in the front row.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Chairperson:** Before we proceed on the consideration of the remaining item referenced in Resolution 2, we would like to invite the minister's staff, the members of the staff of the department to join us at the table, and we politely ask the minister to introduce the members of her staff. Please introduce the members of your staff.

**Ms. Allan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to introduce Jeff Parr, the Deputy Minister of Labour and Immigration; Joanna Plater, the Executive Director of Management Services Division; and Ken Taylor, the Director of Financial Services.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you. There is another issue we have to settle before we proceed; a matter of procedure.

Does the committee wish to proceed through the Estimates in a chronological manner, item by item, or on a global basis, global discussion?

**Mr. Schuler:** If it is the will of the committee, my preference would be that we would go on a global basis at first.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable minister's preference?

**Ms. Allan:** Agreed.

**Mr. Chairperson:** It is agreed. This is agreed. So the floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Schuler:** My first question to the minister is, after 1997, it was clear that Manitoba had to revisit the Manitoba floodway, a floodway that had been built with great vision by the Honourable Duff Roblin and it certainly saved Manitoba from a lot of hardship, a lot of grief and, certainly, from a lot of financial woe. In 1999, as plans were already underway, there was a change in government and the current government continued with the plans. My question to the minister is, in the mix came this concept of forced unionization, where did the genesis of that idea come from?

**Ms. Allan:** I would like to thank the member for his question. The stakeholders are at the table negotiating an agreement with the assistance of Wally Fox-Decent, and we will wait for his report.

**Mr. Schuler:** It is great to get on-the-spot news from the minister. I appreciate that. Meanwhile, back to

the question. I think what the committee would like to know is, was this an idea that was generated out of the Department of Labour? Is this an idea that was generated out of the Premier's office? Where, exactly, did the idea of forced unionization, where was it generated?

**Ms. Allan:** Project labour agreements have been used by different governments and jurisdictions all across Canada. They have been used in many infrastructure projects in Manitoba, and they are very common tools for providing harmonious labour relations on major infrastructure projects.

**Mr. Schuler:** I certainly appreciate the minister's answer. I think it is important to be above-board and her answer that she does not know, as surprising as that is, as a committee I guess we have to accept that. I would like to ask that, once the idea was presented to the minister, how much input has she had as minister in the whole forced unionization, seeing as her title is Minister of Labour?

**Ms. Allan:** The lead minister for the floodway is the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton).

\* (11:00)

**Mr. Schuler:** On page 7 of the Estimates book there is a vision and mission statement and in it says, "To create diverse and vibrant communities, safe and healthy workplaces," and then comes an operative term, "fair employment practices, harmonious labour/management relations, social, economic and political equality for women, all of which contribute to the social, economic and cultural well-being of all Manitobans." If you will, this is something that the minister has been mandated. This is her vision, as minister, to represent this view at the Cabinet table. How often has she gone to the Cabinet table and said to Cabinet that forced unionization does not really fall into the vision and mission statement of the Department of Labour. I, speaking in a third person, I do not think this is the way to proceed, or however she would have worded it.

**Ms. Allan:** Project labour agreements have been used by different jurisdictions all across this country and have been used on many infrastructure projects in Manitoba in the past.

**Mr. Schuler:** I am glad the minister is living up to her reputation of answering questions forthrightly.

Again, she has indicated to this committee that she in fact has not taken that message to the Cabinet table, which then leaves the working men and women of this province with a great unease if they had the opportunity to hear the minister's statement, because at the Cabinet there are a lot of vested interests.

A lot of varying departments are trying to put forward different ideas. On the other hand, there are also various ministers who are supposed to come forward and articulate a different viewpoint. If this minister is silent on defending all working men and women, or at least taking the opportunity to articulate that there might be another side to this issue—on the one hand you have one minister and a department pushing forced unionization, but there might be another side, back to the vision statement, that fair employment practices might be something that a Minister of Labour would bring to the table and say, "Excuse me, Cabinet colleagues, Mr. Premier, this is something that I am supposed to do at the Cabinet table is defend fair employment practices."

Let me give another side to the issue and the minister is tasked with articulating that well. Why has she failed to do that on behalf of working men and women in the province of Manitoba?

**Ms. Allan:** Labour relations in the province of Manitoba have continued to be stable over the course of our mandate which is crucial to the Manitoba economy. Work stoppages: there has been a significant decrease in Manitoba since 1999. The monthly average of person days lost per month per 1000 workers and percentage decrease from the previous administration period: since October 1999 to April 2004 there were 3700; from October 2000 to April 2004 there were 2865. In 2003, our province ranked second lowest among provinces re work stoppages.

**Mr. Schuler:** So am I to take from that the minister goes to Cabinet and absolutely bores her colleagues to tears with statistics or maybe they all sit around the table and they have binders of statistics, "Well, you know, the 5th percentile of the 9th degree of 18 percent of 3000 equals whatever." And then the next minister raises his or her hand and throws more statistics on the table and that is why working men and women feel such an unease in this province because nobody is standing up for them at the Cabinet table. Statistics are great because you can

make them say whatever and that is of little interest to this committee right now.

What the committee would like to know is for the money being spent on the Department of Labour, what value are working men and women getting for it? So far, in the 20 minutes we have been in Estimates, we have found out we are getting zero value for our dollar, because we have a minister with a wonderful department, but the minister will not represent working men and women at the Cabinet table. Part of her job is, and I quote, "To ensure fair employment practices, harmonious labour-management relations," of which I would point out to the minister over and above all her statistics which she is going to recite more than likely for the rest of the day that, if she would dare turn on a radio and listen to the attack ads going at each other right now, they had to bring in mediators to bail the Government out because of ill-conceived ideas, which the minister says she has no idea where it came from. She is entirely out of the loop where this might have taken place.

So we have a minister who has no clue where forced unionization comes from, has absolutely no input on how this is being taken care of, does not stand up for working men and women on either side of the issue.

So she just sits there. So we spend all this money from the Estimates book, which we will be going through later on. We spend all this money for a department, and we have a minister who will not stand up for working men and women. I asked a question weeks ago, and the minister would not get up and answer and then promptly ran out and had a disgraceful display in the hallway. She missed the whole point. The point is that working men and women need an advocate at the Cabinet table.

What this committee is asking the minister is, for all the money being spent on the Department of Labour, what is she doing for working men and women, defending their interests on both sides, not throwing stats at Cabinet colleagues? That is not defending working men and women.

What is she doing at the Cabinet table to defend working men and women on both sides?

**Ms. Allan:** I need no lectures from the member opposite about standing up for working men and

women. In December in this House, we brought in compassionate care legislation. One component of that compassionate care legislation was job retention for people who take maternity and paternal leave. I am sorry, but the member opposite did not support that legislation.

**Mr. Schuler:** One thing that the NDP does particularly well is deflect. I do not think the committee is going to buy into that. Media might and others might buy into that kind of nonsense game playing. Not this committee.

This is a very serious issue. Every department represents a segment in Manitoba, and they deserve to have a strong advocate. Even if it means as minister you have to swallow hard, an advocate, be an advocate for something that maybe is not quite where you come from. I know my colleague opposite, the minister, comes from a very deep-rooted labour side of society, but now she is the Minister of Labour for all workers in Manitoba, and it would be becoming of the minister to lay aside her bias, go to the Cabinet table and say, "Let us at least pause and reflect that there might be another side to this issue."

The minister from Thompson clearly, feet deeply, deeply rooted in the labour movement, represents labour exceptionally well, but it is not his job, as minister responsible for the floodway, to necessarily be defending working men and women, all working men and women, all sides, because that responsibility is on the shoulders of the Minister of Labour.

\*(11:10)

Again, I will ask the minister, why has she been so negligent in her duties in standing up for the working men and women on all sides of the issue? We have heard time and time again, this is not about wages because basically at this point in time they are all getting paid the same amount of money. So it is not about wages. We can set that aside. The Government has indicated that they are worried about work stoppages, strikes.

Well, if you have a non-unionized shop building a bridge, there is not a real threat of a strike, so why would you force unionization on them so that you do not have a strike? I do not want to pose that as a

question because I will just end up with more statistics.

Those men and women who have chosen not to have a union shop, those men and women who have chosen to go with a union shop, what they would like, what they request and what they need is an advocate at the Cabinet table who defends all sides, and not just sits back and says, "Well, I have no idea where the genesis of forced unionization of the floodway came from. It is not under my purview as Minister of Labour."

If you have not heard a greater abdication of responsibility, if you have not heard a more shameful abdication of responsibility, that one of the largest construction projects around the city of Winnipeg, not in Manitoba, but around the city of Winnipeg, that is going to have a labour agreement imposed on it and the Minister of Labour says, "It is not my department." What? Surely, the minister jests. You must be kidding. That is exactly where the Minister of Labour should be involved, to ensure that all workers are and I quote, "fair employment practices," and this committee finds the minister wanting in that part of the vision and mission statement of her department. She has failed in that part, and if it would have been the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) who would have been the Minister of Labour, I would have had the same discussion with him. If it would have been the former Minister of Labour, Becky Barrett, I would have the same discussion with her. It is their responsibility to see to it that fair employment practices, it does not matter on what project, it does not matter where it is, that at least that is recognized and it is the Minister of Labour who is supposed to see to it that that takes place.

I would like to ask the minister, will she endeavour to involve herself in one of the most controversial, divisive acts of this Government since Bill 44. Will she get involved in this issue and at least represent all the workers and bring a different side to the table? She owes at least that much to the working men and women of this province.

**Ms. Allan:** Well, working men and women are represented by the stakeholders who are at the table in negotiating with the help of a very skilled individual, Mr. Fox-Decent and he got involved because the opposition parties wanted Mr. Fox-

Decent to be involved and we feel that he has a lot to bring to this process and we will wait for his report.

**Mr. Schuler:** You know we are so fortunate to have the likes of Professor Wally Fox-Decent. He was my first political science professor at the University of Manitoba and just an outstanding individual. You know, I actually feel sorry for him because he is at the point and time now where he reminds me of the guy who runs around behind the NDP parade with his shovel and his pail and he has to clean up all the mess that the NDP government leaves behind.

The reason why we have a problem with this is because one minister, a strong labour advocate, and a department not there to defend workers' rights, comes up with this half-baked idea that a forced unionization of the floodway, and the Minister of Labour did not stand up to the plate and say, "Wait, what are you thinking?" That is why we have Professor Wally Fox-Decent now trying to settle a dispute that has gotten so out of hand. Exactly what they were, supposedly, trying to avoid, and we have not moved a thimbleful of earth in the floodway, and already we have division, already we have problems.

Hello, Wally. We have a crisis again. It must be that time of the week. Another crisis. Come bail us out because the Minister of Labour did not do her job. If the Minister of Labour would have been doing her job, I would suggest to this committee, we would not be in this problem. They would not be negotiating right now. Instead, they would be getting ready to do contracts and build the floodway.

That is the entire issue that we are trying to get at. The minister must understand her department's mandate, the vision, and understand that working men and women need a proper advocate at the Cabinet table. Mr. Chairman, I need no lectures from anyone to know that if you do not have a strong advocate, what that can mean to working men and women. I know first-hand what that can mean because I lived through it. I can tell the minister that it is important to have proper advocacy from ministers at a Cabinet table, as I would expect the minister to go to the table if there was something on the other side. If there was a real problem with workers being abused at workplace, I would expect the minister to go and say, no, this is just not acceptable. We have to protect the working men and women because they are the backbone of the economy. It is not paper shufflers that create wealth;

it is individuals with their hands that are manufacturing, that are working, that are building and constructing, that is the crux of our economy. They deserve to have an advocate at the table, whether they be unionized or not. They deserve to have an advocate at the table. For all the money that is going to be spent on the Department of Labour in this year, \$29,139,000. That is a lot of money. Not the biggest department. That is a lot of money, and why we agreed to this.

The department was started in 1940, I understand, and the reason was you need someone at the Cabinet table advocating for all working men and women. I ask the minister again: Will she endeavour to go to the Cabinet table and advocate for all working men and women?

**Ms. Allan:** As the Labour critic has said, he would ask Becky Barrett the same question if she were the minister, and Steve Ashton the same question if he were the minister. Quite frankly, I do not think that the member would be comfortable with any answer that we give him because he believes that he should probably be the Minister of Labour, and he will get that opportunity when the public has confidence in his party to be the Government.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Before we proceed, when we refer to a minister of the Crown, we refer to him or her not by name, but by the department or by the constituency he represents. That is the rule. It is for information to every member of the committee.

Former members are no longer members of the House. Of course, you can refer to them as their name. They no longer have the office attached to their name.

\* (11:20)

I understand that before you can put a question, you have premises to make, but the premises sometimes may be too long. It may not be fair for the Chair to comment either way, but I am just making observation.

I was told the Member for Springfield has 30 minutes to make the premise and then ask the question. That is the maximum.

**Mr. Schuler:** I thank the Chair. I doubt I used 3 minutes for the premise, because we do have a lot of

ground to cover and we will continue to do so. I thank the Chair for his comments.

When master labour agreements are put into place, for instance with Manitoba Hydro, one of the main reasons clearly is it is remote construction and it involves what kind of time off, what kind of rights workers have to go back to families, more urban areas, on and on and on.

It really is a protection for the worker and it is a protection for the construction company because of remote locations. That is why it is accepted when we go into 1- and 2- and 4- and the price keeps going up, there might even be \$5-million construction projects. That is why that has been an accepted practice.

The floodway is basically in an urban area. It has really not the same conditions of a remote construction project. With everything being considered, it is clear that there was an underlying motivation for the forced unionization.

Perhaps the Government thought they were going to get this through without anyone noticing. Maybe that was the idea. Maybe they thought they were just going to by sleight-of-hand sneak it through and it would just happen. That did not happen.

I would like to ask the Minister of Labour—we have covered this ground, but I want to ask her again. If the forced unionization goes through, heaven forbid, is the minister prepared that, as the bulk of construction companies in Manitoba where the workers have chosen not to be unionized, if the contracts then are let outside of the province, does the minister see this as a benefit to working men and women to see Manitobans bypassed because of ideology and construction companies and workers from outside of the province come in and benefit?

**Ms. Allan:** I would like to thank the member for the long-winded hypothetical question, but we have a project labour agreement that is being negotiated by the stakeholders at the table with Mr. Fox-Decent and we will wait for that report.

**Mr. Schuler:** Well, the minister's response is, at best, underwhelming. It is, I guess, what we will come to expect. Why, if she would not defend working men and women at the Cabinet table, would she be concerned about working men and women

getting the jobs, bringing home the paycheques that are necessary?

When the last floodway was built, it actually started a very strong heavy construction industry in Manitoba. We inherited from the initial floodway project a real benefit to the province, something because of ideology, or on this minister's part lack of wanting to cross more senior members in her Government, the Premier (Mr. Doer) perhaps, is willing to sacrifice that industry, weaken it and allow others to move in.

That is very unfortunate. The Minister of Labour, who should be in the middle of this issue, has indicated to this committee that she is out of the loop, has no interest in defending working men and women at the Cabinet table and, frankly, could not care less where the contracts go.

I would like to move on to the committee. Can the minister tell us the whole negotiation process, under which department is that being facilitated?

**Ms. Allan:** I believe the lead minister for the floodway agreement and the project labour agreement is Mr. Steve Ashton.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Again, may I remind the honourable minister about convention in this committee. The honourable Minister of Labour.

**Ms. Allan:** My apologies, Mr. Chair. I believe the lead minister is the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton).

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you.

**Mr. Schuler:** Is the Department of Labour then not involved at all with the negotiations taking place?

**Ms. Allan:** That is correct.

**Mr. Schuler:** I just want to be really clear on this. There is no departmental involvement on the part of the Department of Labour in the negotiations between the stakeholders involved in the forced unionization of the floodway. Is that correct?

**Ms. Allan:** The stakeholders are at the table negotiating an agreement, and it would be most important that the Department of Labour at this point remain neutral.

**Mr. Schuler:** So the mediator was appointed not by the Minister of Labour, is that correct?

**Ms. Allan:** That is correct.

**Mr. Schuler:** When this was brought to Cabinet, did the minister voice her opinion on the appointment of Professor Wally Fox-Decent?

**Ms. Allan:** There is a floodway authority that is managing this infrastructure project and that is the lead in regard to the appointment of the facilitator.

**Mr. Schuler:** So the whole process is being paid by the floodway authority.

**Ms. Allan:** That would be a good question for the Minister of Water Stewardship.

**Mr. Schuler:** So none of the costs are being picked up by the Department of Labour.

**Ms. Allan:** That is correct.

**Mr. Schuler:** Did any of the vested parties that are negotiating right now approach the minister and indicate to her their concerns about what was going on with the forced unionization of the floodway?

**Ms. Allan:** No.

**Mr. Schuler:** Did the minister receive any correspondence? Did any of the vested parties correspond with the minister in regard to the forced unionization of the floodway?

\* (11:30)

**Ms. Allan:** Not that I can recall off the top of my head.

**Mr. Schuler:** If we go back to the vision statement, we have a substantial inharmonious labour-management relation, yet the Minister of Labour received not a letter, has not expended one penny, has not dealt with the issue at the Cabinet table, will refer all matters to another minister. Yet we have a real issue with labour-management relations. Is that for real? I mean, is the minister saying that she has completely walked away from the file?

**Ms. Allan:** I am not sure there was a question there.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Will the member pose the question?

**Mr. Schuler:** The minister is supposed to ensure harmonious labour-management relations. The minister has indicated she has not defended working men and women at the Cabinet table. She has indicated she has not met with any of the stakeholders. She has not received any correspondence from the two warring sides. Her department has nothing to do with the mediation and not one penny has been expended by the Department of Labour to help mediate this growing and festering problem in the province.

I ask the minister: Is that fair that none of those things have happened under her being the Minister of Labour?

**Ms. Allan:** The lead minister is the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton), and that is whose responsibility, that is where it lies. There is a floodway authority that has been established to deal with the floodway. There is a process in place for negotiating the agreement with stakeholders. Mr. Fox-Decent is a facilitator that has been requested by the Opposition that is involved in this because everyone has a great deal of respect for Mr. Fox-Decent's work.

**Mr. Schuler:** We have a minister made responsible for building the floodway. We have a floodway authority of which the chair has said, "My role is not labour relations; my job is to get the floodway built," in a meeting he had with the Heavy Construction Association.

The minister responsible for the floodway, that minister's role is to see to it that the job gets done. What the minister has said that the entire file of labour relations at the floodway is completely outside of the purview of her and her department. Maybe it is just this committee finds it so incredible that a minister of the Crown, who is mandated, mandated with advocating for working men and women, has walked away from the entire file.

One of the largest construction projects around the city of Winnipeg in an urban centre, the Minister of Labour has abdicated complete authority and responsibility to another minister who is not responsible to stand up for working men and women at the Cabinet table. What is so incredible is if the minister is willing to do it on this file how many other files is she going to do it with?



She was sworn in as Minister of Labour to stand up for working men and women. She has told this committee that she has walked away from them. Yes, the committee finds that amazing, and not in a positive way. Not one word spoken at the Cabinet table to defend working men and women. Not a letter, not recommending to the minister responsible for building the floodway that, perhaps, this has gone far enough? Nothing? The minister has walked away from her responsibilities and, yes, that, this committee finds unbelievable. I would ask the minister: "Does she see any role for herself in the issue of the forced unionization and the bad feelings that that is building between labour and management in the province? Does she see any role for herself as Minister of Labour?"

**Ms. Allan:** Well, I just want to tell the MLA from Springfield that the last hour that we have spent discussing the department's Estimates has been really quite interesting. I want to tell him that I find him quite boringly predictable, that it would be all about my role in regard to something that he does not really understand and, quite frankly, it really is not out of character that we would spend the last hour in regard to me in my role as Minister of Labour. It has mostly been personal attack, and it really is predictable.

**Mr. Schuler:** You know, for a new politician, I would just point out to the minister that, actually, this is not about her. This is not about an individual. This is about how the Province functions. It is about the working men and women, and we may not agree on whether or not there should be a union here, or there should not be a union there. This is an issue above that. This is an issue about two sides having a fight in the province that is not helping things. It is not encouraging a better Manitoba. It is not about the minister. I am sorry; at no point in time have I personalized it, have I called the minister by her first name; I have not even referred to her seat. This is not about her. It is about working men and women and about who stands up for them at the Cabinet table. Simple. There are vested interests that come to the Cabinet table and there has got to be a balance. Right now there is not a balance from what we can see, because the same individual who is charged with building the floodway is now the same individual who brought in forced unionization, is now the same individual that has to mediate the problem. That is not balance.

\* (11:40)

We spend, as a Province, close to \$30 million in the Department of Labour and all that the committee is asking, for what? What are we getting for our almost \$30 million? That is what Estimates is all about. It is bringing government to account for the monies they spent. What value are we getting? Right now I have yet, as a critic for Labour, been able to figure out what value we are getting from the Department of Labour, because there is a massive construction project being planned, there is a forced unionization being put on top, and the minister, who is pushing the forced unionization, is the same minister that is now charged with mediating the issue.

If I were to indicate this would be in any other country, the comment would be, well, that is Third World countries for you. This is Manitoba. There are supposed to be checks and balances. It is supposed to be a scale. At least there is some balance. Right now, there is no balance because the same individual cannot be three different roles. That is what we have. It is not about a person. This is not personal. It is about the Government. The Government has put a minister in this position. The minister should have gone to the table and said, no, this is not right. That is the least we should have had from the minister.

Weeks ago, when I got up and I asked the minister to step down if she cannot stand up and defend working men and women, then why is she there? Maybe we should have asked the question, can the minister tell us what she sees her role as being? Ribbon cutting? Speeches? Or defending men and women who need an advocate at the table? Maybe we should sit back, we will give the minister some time and maybe I do have it wrong. Maybe she should tell us what she sees is the role of a Minister of Labour in the province of Manitoba.

**Ms. Allan:** Bill 4. We voted for it, you did not.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** I guess I would like to make it a little bit personal in the sense of asking the minister, if you recognize when we had the flood of the century, Manitobans needed help and people from all over the province came to the city of Winnipeg and pitched in. The government of the day did not ask, well, if you want to help you have to be a member of a union.

Then we go a number of years later and then we have a government, and we have to be very clear on

this, the Doer government is saying that if you want to work on the floodway you have to be a union member. So that, in essence, is the Government's position. The Minister of Labour is supposed to represent the work force, whether you are unionized or not unionized. If the minister wants to claim that she had nothing to do with it, as it appears as if she is, I would ask her what her personal opinion is.

Does she feel that it is appropriate that one of the largest work projects in the province in an urban area has no place for non-union workers? Would that be her personal opinion?

**Ms. Allan:** The stakeholders are at the table and those stakeholders include union employees. They represent union employees and non-union employees. They are at the table negotiating an agreement, and we will wait for the report.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Sure, that is a cop-out of an answer. The minister is just being asked to give an opinion as to whether or not—it has nothing to do with negotiations. Does she not have the political courage, Mr. Chairperson, to tell the committee whether or not she feels that it is right or it is wrong? You know, I think that if she canvasses her own constituents, even union members, she will find that the Government is out to lunch on this. Yet because they have made this mistake—and you know it takes a great deal of courage on a government to admit when it has made a mistake. I would like to think that a Minister of Labour would be at the table to discuss her or his concerns.

My question would be: Has the Minister of Labour expressed any opinions to Cabinet regarding the unionization requirement for the floodway? Has she expressed concerns whatsoever in regard to that issue at Cabinet?

**Ms. Allan:** Well, it is really nice of the unofficial Labour critic to now starting asking the same questions that the official Labour critic was asking. I just wanted the MLA for Inkster to know that if at any time I feel that I, as a minister, have made a mistake, I would be more than ready to admit it publicly.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Well, Mr. Chairperson, that was not the answer to the question. I appreciate the comments. The question is does she see that there is a problem that is there? Let me ask the minister: if

Manitoba unions were to grow in numbers, does she believe that would be a good thing for the province?

**Ms. Allan:** I just want to remind the member across the way that, as the Minister of Labour, I have to have respect for the negotiating process, and we will wait for the report.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Mr. Chair, this has absolutely nothing to do with the floodway. The question is, if it was up to the Minister of Labour, would she like to see the number of union members grow in the province of Manitoba?

**Ms. Allan:** With all due respect, that is not a decision that is made by me. That is made by the workers in the province of Manitoba.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Mr. Chairperson, does the Minister of Labour see her role at promoting unionization in the province?

**Ms. Allan:** Well, we have a balanced approach, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Mr. Chair, then can you explain to me how that balanced approach meant you, as the Minister of Labour, saying absolutely nothing on the issue of forced union membership in order to work on the floodway? How is that a balanced approach when you sit back and say absolutely nothing?

**Ms. Allan:** Well, thank you so much, Mr. Chair. I think he might be getting it now. You see, that is the balanced approach. You allow people that are negotiating an agreement to negotiate that agreement without interference, with the respect of a facilitator.

**Mr. Schuler:** My colleague asked a question. Do you support unionization? And the minister responded, "As minister, that is up to the employees." Now the minister is finally getting it. The minister actually misspoke herself and contradicted exactly what it is that her Government is doing. That is what we are trying to point out to the minister, is the inherent contradiction; that she, as minister, is not supposed to be part of a forced unionization.

The issue of unionization is about men and women deciding if they wish to be collectivized in a union, be collectively in a union, or if they wish to be non-unionized. The minister says, "That is up to

employees, except with the floodway, where the Government imposed forced unionization." Then she goes, and this is where the doublespeak comes in, "Well, with the forced unionization of the floodway, there are negotiations going on."

\*(11:50)

It is not negotiations going on about employees asking whether or not they wish to be part of the union. The negotiations are on the Government's forced unionization. The minister is trying to spin this out of the realm because the Government has got itself into a box. If you listen to the minister and the Government, and I do sense the Government is terribly uneasy about this, and they should be uneasy about it. First of all, the minister did not defend working men and women; we have got that at committee. But, more importantly, they do not know how to get out of this. So they have appointed a mediator and they are making it sound that the mediator is going to negotiate the groups out of something that is out of the control of the Government, when it is exactly this Government that got us into the mess in the first place. So, in other words, what we have is, we have negotiations to try and negotiate the Government out of a tight spot, out of a mess.

The minister runs around saying, "I had nothing to do with this. I will have nothing to do with this; this is not in my purview," which is where, if the minister would had done her job in the first place and would have defended working men and women in the first place, the Government would not be in this mess that they are in today.

So what we have done is we have gone through a whole bunch of points, pointed out how bad this is for labour and business. Because now we have really harmed relations. The feelings are running pretty high. I have heard the ads, and the ads are not nice. They are not conducive, and I quote from the vision statement, "to a harmonious labour-management relation."

I ask the minister, how in heaven's name did the Minister of Labour let it get this far.

**Ms. Allan:** The workers in the province of Manitoba, union and non-union, are represented by the stakeholders that are at the table negotiating an agreement, and we are waiting for the report from Mr. Fox-Decent.

**Mr. Schuler:** But they are negotiating the mess that the Government has left behind. Professor Fox-Decent is trying to unravel a disaster that the Government started in the first place. Whether this individual, this MLA or another MLA who would have been the Minister of Labour, that is completely immaterial to this committee. It does not matter to this committee. When we say the minister we mean the Government; a group of individuals who are running the province. The minister should not take it personal; it is about governance. How did governance in Manitoba let things get so far? We have almost a \$30-million Department of Labour and, from a governance perspective, how in heaven's name did we let it get to this point?

Was nobody sitting around the Cabinet table saying, I think this could be a problem? We are going to waste valuable energy. We are going to unravel any harmonious relationship between management and labour that might exist.

That is where we are trying to get with this committee: some kind of an acknowledgement. How is it that governance because I do not want to offend the minister. She takes everything so personally, so I will make it governance. How did governance let things get so far?

It was government that brought in the forced unionization. It is because of government that we have all the divisions. It is because of the Government's plan that now we have all these hard-pressed, high-level intense negotiations where we have labour and management duking it out, which is completely contrary to what the vision statement of the Department of Labour and Immigration is supposed to be there for. I do not know how much clearer I can make it.

I ask the minister again how is it that governance let things get this far that we have ads between two groups attacking each other publicly. How did it get this far? How did we let this get out of hand?

**Ms. Allan:** The only person that is wasting valuable energy is the MLA for Springfield.

**Mr. Schuler:** I do not think that an MLA doing their job is ever a waste. I am doing my job, trying to make a minister accountable to the people of Manitoba, and I will continue to do that. I will do it

to the best of my ability on behalf of the working men and women who are standing around looking at what is taking place. They are not at the table. They do not know if it means they are going to have a job or not. They do not know what this will mean in the end because government, governance, botched it. It is because of those individuals and, actually, I have spoken with some of them, and this was a four-to-five-year guaranteed job which the Government has jeopardized. Did we really have to go down this road? Was there not a better, an easier, way of doing this? *[interjection]* Really?

You know, I think it is a sad day for Manitoba. We had asked the minister, and I would like to ask the Minister of Labour, what kind of mandate was given to Professor Wally Fox-Decent. I know the answer is going to come back, the minister had no input into the entire process. So why even bother asking the question?

I would like to move on to another issue, but I am going to ask the question one more time of the Minister of Labour of the province of Manitoba. How is it that the individual who is tasked, the individual who is paid to be Minister of Labour of Manitoba, who has a clear vision and mission statement in front of her, or him or her, whoever the minister might be, that that minister could, without ever speaking up at the Cabinet table, never was corresponded with, is not involved with the mediation process, her department is not involved with the mediation process, how is it that the minister got to this point? To allow the breakdown of relations to this point that we have to bring in Professor Wally Fox-Decent to mediate on something that her own Government proposed?

This is not a fight about an issue of who gets to drive which earth-mover. We have two groups in society who are duking it out because of the Government, and the minister, who is supposed to be there to ensure harmonious relations says, nothing to do with me. How is that possible? And, yes, it is my duty to ask these questions as the critic, to ask for accountability, and that is what I am trying to do. I am asking the minister to please be accountable to the Estimates Committee on Labour and Immigration. Please show some accountability. How is it that this got out of hand? Why was the mediator not put in earlier? Why was not a different viewpoint brought to Cabinet? Why was the Department of Labour, with its expertise—and there are incredible

people in this Chamber, and throughout the department, who could have sat down and given other models that could have been followed; could have sat down with the sides and said, come on, let us deal with this.

\* (12:00)

Instead, it had to get to the point where it got so out of hand. Now, we have Professor Fox-Decent called in, and ads on the radio. My goodness. How did we let it get this far? We have a Minister of Labour who is tasked to ensure that it does not get this far. That is what we are trying to get to the bottom of, what we are spending almost \$30 million for. I ask the minister how did we let this get out of hand.

**Ms. Allan:** I just want to inform the member that Mr. Fox-Decent was appointed five times as mediator in the last six months of their mandate in 1999 to facilitate particular agreements for the previous administration and we have every confidence he will do an excellent job for us.

**Mr. Schuler:** Absolutely, and I would suggest to the minister there is probably a likely case if it involved labour-management relations; it was the Minister of Labour that appointed Professor Wally Fox-Decent. And in this case it should have been the minister involved in it. But the thing is, when Professor Fox-Decent was involved in those issues, it was issues involving management and labour.

It was a dispute between management and labour that they could not resolve, so they were asked if they wanted a mediator. Not bring in a mediator to bail out the Government because they botched the forced unionization of a project. Let us not confuse pineapples and grapes. They are two completely separate issues. This was not something that labour or management wanted, to duke it out in public, but that is what the Government gave us. And now to try and bail out the Premier (Mr. Doer) because, clearly, the Minister of Labour had nothing to do with it. It is the Premier who tends to get up and answer all the questions. Now the Premier needs somebody to bail them out. This is not anymore about labour and management this is about trying to get the Government off the hook. There is a big difference and the minister knows it.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Is there a question here?

**Mr. Lamoureux:** A yes-and-no-answer would be very much appreciated from the minister. The question is has this minister expressed concerns regarding the mandatory union issue on the floodway to any of her caucus colleagues, just concerns about non-union members. Has she ever done that?

**Ms. Allan:** The only people talking about forced unionization are opposition members.

**Mr. Schuler:** Over the last couple of years the individuals who are in a defined contribution pension plan have been lobbying, I am sure, government, and have certainly been lobbying opposition. The problem being that with the defined contribution list, this does not involve defined benefit pension, this has to do with defined contribution pensions, is that they are allowed to, under current legislation, withdraw 6 percent.

If you look at the way it works, 50 percent of the money is put in by employees, 50 percent is put in by business and, in fact, they are allowed to decide where they wish to invest their money. I would suggest to the committee that they have done quite well. They have invested prudently. They have done well. They have ensured that they will have a pension when they retire. As we know, the first 10 years of retirement tend to be a very heavy draw on a pension. Those tend to be the most heavy-draw years of one's retirement life and then after that it scales down.

I know the minister and many MLAs in Manitoba have received a lot of compelling arguments into why there has to be some change with the defined contribution pension plan. We have the case of Mr. Klassen from Brandon who, if he wanted all of his money out of his pension plan, would have to live to a little bit more than 120 years. Although he maybe would like to live that long, he certainly does not think he will be needing much of a pension in his last 119th and 120th year. He would like to draw a little bit more now.

We have cases where individuals, because of health reasons, need other medications. They have need for other kinds of treatment that, perhaps, is not covered, or, as the Government has cut back on a lot of individuals needing certain medications, the costs are going up. They are having difficulty paying for it.

In some cases, individuals have gone to the banks and have borrowed against their mortgage.

The Government has known about this. For the last five years, this has been an issue that is steadily growing. Clearly, the Government has had enough time to deal with the issue. Can the minister tell us where exactly she and her Government are in regards to the defined contribution pension plans?

**Ms. Allan:** I would just like to introduce the superintendent of pensions for the Department of Labour and Immigration, Deb Lyon, who has joined us.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you.

**Ms. Allan:** We will, as we move forward with our pension legislation, take all of the comments that we received from individuals and from stakeholders. We will bring forward legislation that will have a balance between the need for pension flexibility and the pension promise, Mr. Chair. That is a promise that there is an income for life for the retiree.

**Mr. Schuler:** Could the minister tell us where the pension promise is?

**Ms. Allan:** Yes, pension promise is the fundamental principle of pension plans. I am really pleased that the MLA for Springfield has asked about this particular pension promise, particularly because he has a piece of legislation before the House. It would be pertinent for him to understand how pensions came to being in this country. It is the basic fundamental principle that a pension plan was built on in regard to employers, employees and governments developing plans. It is the pension promise, a life-time income for the retiree.

**Mr. Schuler:** The Premier, in his style that he has, weak as it might be, mentioned Margaret Thatcher. It is always an intrigue for myself how Margaret Thatcher weighs so heavily on this particular Premier's decision-making. Can the minister tell us in what context does the Premier keep bringing in Margaret Thatcher and pensions into the debate?

**Ms. Allan:** Well, the MLA for Springfield is more than welcome to attend Executive Council Estimates and ask him that very question himself.

**Mr. Schuler:** So I guess the answer is, "I do not know," in which case, that makes two of us, which is almost a standard answer from the minister.

\* (12:10)

The Premier keeps mentioning that there was a pension reform taken in Britain under the Thatcher government and references it. Is there a reason why the Premier would keep mentioning it when the entire pension freedom issue is raised?

**Mr. Chairperson:** As Chairperson, this is an Estimate on the Department of Labour and Immigration. The questions should be within the Department of Labour and Immigration. Comments and debate should be within the Department of Labour and Immigration to hold the minister accountable, not about the Premier, which is already done. Executive Council is done.

**Mr. Schuler:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. If the Chair wishes to become a member of the committee then, perhaps, he should step down as Chair, but I do not think this member or any other member on this committee appreciates his lectures. If he does not like the questions, he should keep to himself. His role is not here to sit and start doubting where it is that the questioning is going. We said global and pensions are part of Estimates. I would ask the Chair to please do his job and not do my job. I will do my job, thank you very much. I would ask the Chair to keep order. That is his role. My role is to ask the minister questions, and I will continue to do that. I do not appreciate the Chair rolling his eyes and somehow questioning where I might be going with my questions.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I roll my eyes because I want to keep order.

**Mr. Schuler:** Do that; do your job.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I am doing it.

**Mr. Schuler:** Good, then let me ask my questions.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Do so.

**Mr. Schuler:** My question to the minister is we have an issue in Manitoba and it affects lots of Manitobans. It has to do with defined contribution pensions. There is an issue out there of—Saskatchewan has done it and they found it to be a positive move. Ontario is looking at it. Alberta is looking at it and, evidently, Great Britain had moved this way some time ago. It comes into the debate.

What I am asking of the minister because, clearly, it is her Government that has raised what is

taking place in Great Britain, I am asking the minister if she can tell this committee, does she have information of what took place in Great Britain? It keeps coming into the debate. I think it is healthy for us to know where government is going with this issue.

**Ms. Allan:** We do not have that exact information here with us today, but we would certainly get that information and provide it to the MLA.

**Mr. Schuler:** Certainly, we appreciate that as a committee because the Saskatchewan model is a bit more than a year old and, so far, the move has been positive. Clearly, if there were changes made in other jurisdictions some time ago, that would give another reference point. Certainly, we appreciate the minister and her department. Clearly, some research has been done somewhere because the Premier of the province has referenced it on numerous occasions in regard to the changes being proposed to the pension act. We certainly appreciate the minister endeavouring to bring that to the table.

There was another issue that was raised and, if memory serves me correctly, I believe it was the Premier. If the minister would excuse me, I will not get the exact name, but she will probably know. Is it the legal council of women? The Premier referenced this council that they had made a submission to government. Can the minister give us a little bit more information about what their submission was in regard to the pension freedom issue in Manitoba?

**Ms. Allan:** The Manitoba Association of Women and the Law. Yes, they strongly agree with the Pension Commission's view that the special status of pensions and pension benefits should be preserved. It is extremely important for plan members, spouses and partners to have retirement income in their elder years. Immediate access to pension benefits results in financial hardship for many Manitoba women.

That was a submission to the Pension Commission dated February 26, 2003.

**Mr. Schuler:** Would the committee have access to that submission? Is it on the Web site of the Pension Commission?

**Ms. Allan:** We would ask them for their permission, and we would certainly get that information for the MLA if he would want it.

**Mr. Schuler:** I think that would be very helpful. Certainly, we would appreciate it if we could see the submission. When Bill 212 goes to committee, we would really like them to come forward and make their presentations. I think what is important about this entire issue is (a) that it be debated in this Chamber and, secondly, and probably more important, is that it go to committee and we hear from Manitobans. I think we have heard a lot of different ideas into how best to deal with the locked-in pension issue. I think it would be very helpful for government and opposition to hear what Manitobans have to say and where they are going with this issue. We would appreciate that submission to be able to have a look at it.

I would like to ask the minister: In the hallway outside, and I know the minister was there as well, the Premier went on to say that they were not necessarily looking at Bill 212, but that the Government was going to be coming up with its own legislation this fall. Is that something the minister sees as a realistic time line?

**Ms. Allan:** We certainly would like to have all the information before we proceed, because every jurisdiction in Canada is looking at the Saskatchewan experiment. We also would like to have the ruling from CAPSA, the Canadian Association of Pension Supervisory Authorities, with regard to the unlocking issue. If we could do it by the fall—we certainly would like to be able to do it by the fall.

**Mr. Schuler:** Just for the minister's information, I was at the CAPSA meeting here the week it was held; in fact, it was held across the street. CAPSA has made it very clear that the unlocking of pensions is a political issue, that they were not interested in going into that issue. CAPSA is looking at harmonizing all the rules and trying to have a set of rules for every province that makes it a lot easier for people transferring pensions, and so on and so forth. On this issue, they made it very clear that they did not see it as being a responsibility of them as an organization to come up with a recommendation. In fact, they were intending not to come up with a recommendation, that it would be better dealt with at the legislative level, that it should be by Legislature and not by recommendation. They were very uncomfortable with that.

I know the minister has referenced them on numerous occasions, and, at the meeting, they made

it very clear to all the stakeholders there that this was in the political realm, in the legislative realm, not in their purview. They were not comfortable with that.

Back to the Premier's comments when he made a commitment that the legislation would be done by this fall. Has the minister tasked her department to begin with the drafting of legislation, and when does she see herself starting to meet with stakeholders in discussing where the department is going with pension reform?

\* (12:20)

**Ms. Allan:** With regard to CAPSA, I want to make it very clear to the MLA for Springfield that there is a separate committee that is dealing with the exceptions with regard to unlocking, so it is very important that he understand that is being looked at by CAPSA. He is shaking his head, no, so, obviously, what we will have to do is get him further information with regard to that. We will get that for him because I think it is very important that any MLA that has legislation that is going to be presented in this Chamber on pension legislation must know all the information. He has to have the correct information. So, unfortunately, he went to one presentation and did not seem to realize that this separate committee has been established by CAPSA to look at the exceptions to unlocking. So it is very important he have all the information.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Mr. Chair, the other day I have had opportunity to ask the minister with regard to the whole idea of hardship withdrawals. I wanted to cite two specific examples. This is something that happens in Ontario, in the Ontario legislation. One would be that if there is a predetermined established threshold, annual threshold, maybe he might have a pensioner that is not meeting that threshold, that they would be able to access it; to individuals, at times for health reasons, their ability to move around changes, and there might be a need for them to make modifications to their living environment, which would be another good example of a hardship withdrawal.

I am wondering if the minister is prepared to at least address those two points as to giving assurance to the committee that, at the very least, these two points will, in fact, be brought in.

**Ms. Allan:** I would like to thank the member for bringing it up in Estimates this morning because

those are actually the two issues that the CAPSA committee is looking at: the terminally ill and cases of hardship. That is why that information is very important to us so, of course, we will have a look at it.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** I know that, at times, it is beneficial for the public if they get some sort of strong direction coming from a minister and, by being somewhat vague, yes, we are open to it, and so forth. I think that it would go a long way in showing that the Government is, indeed, going to be doing something positive here.

I do not see why the reluctance to making a commitment. Is it because she is not able to make a commitment, or she does not see the benefits? Is this something in which the Government still has not decided on allowing? If that is the case, then just say that to be true; that, look, government is just—we are open to it, but, as far as we are concerned, we are not convinced of that argument yet. Give some specific direction on those two points, as examples would be appreciated.

**Ms. Allan:** I have said very clearly that this is one of the very serious pieces of information that we need so that we can bring in good legislation here in Manitoba. There has not been a review of The Pension Benefits Act in this province for over 20 years. So, when we bring this act in, it will stand the test of time. We will have all the information. I just want the MLA to know that is important information and we are definitely going to look at it. Thank you.

**Mr. Schuler:** Again, the Premier (Mr. Doer) went out into the hallway and indicated to Mr. Klassen from Brandon that there would be some kind of legislation, his legislation, forthcoming in the fall. Again, the minister has not indicated if this is a time line that she is going to feel obligated to live by. Can the minister tell us? Is the process of developing legislation already under way?

**Ms. Allan:** We definitely will, now that we have all of the public comments that have been finished and we have had the opportunity to look at those, start to proceed with the drafting of the legislation. We will also have an opportunity to look at some of the other very important pieces of information that we will require. There is absolutely no question. I have said it before and I will say it again, today. If we could bring in legislation, and we felt comfortable with

legislation in the fall that would stand the test of time, we will bring it in.

**Mr. Schuler:** You have a bill right now, Bill 212, on the Order Paper. Can the minister tell us if there is there any intent on behalf of government to allow that to go on to committee?

**Ms. Allan:** Well, those very decisions are made by the House leaders. The MLA knows that, but I am glad that the MLA has brought up the issue of Bill 212 because there are some very serious issues around Bill 212. He likes to talk about what the Premier said in the House the other day, but one of the issues that he did not bring up, Mr. Chair, is the fact that Bill 212 has no spousal protection in it, and if it does have spousal protection in it, I would like the member to show me where in the legislation it has spousal protection. There is also no creditor protection in the bill and, if there is creditor protection in the bill, I would like the MLA for Springfield to point out to me in that bill where the creditor protection is.

I would also like to tell the member that you did not model the Saskatchewan legislation. The unlocking in the legislation goes far beyond the Saskatchewan experiment. You cannot unlock your pensions until the age of 55 in Saskatchewan. Bill 212, you can unlock as early as the age of 40 if you would like. So we have serious concerns about Bill 212. I do not think we would want to see that legislation passed here in Manitoba and put thousands of Manitobans at risk.

**Mr. Schuler:** I see the minister is back to her bugaboo scare tactic ways and that does not wash. We know those issues are covered off and are covered off well. This is simply an amendment to existing legislation and the minister knows that.

Does the minister not believe it is healthy to have this debate to allow people to come forward and let their concerns be known, where, as a committee of the House, we would have the opportunity to hear from individuals and hear their presentations?

**Ms. Allan:** Well, when we bring our legislation forward, Mr. Chair, it will be a well-thought-out piece of legislation that has all of the information, and we will have done our due diligence. We will be sure-footed, and we will not write something on the back of an envelope because we wanted to have a



political piece of legislation brought forward to this House that does not protect Manitobans.

**Mr. Schuler:** I am not too sure trashing public servants who diligently write legislation is appropriate for a minister of the Crown. We will leave it at that. That is what we have come to expect from the minister.

I just would hope that, if there is legislation brought forward, it is thought out a little bit better than the forced unionization of the floodway, another pathetic attempt by this Government. For the minister, it is always about her and her Government, instead of being about the people. Government knows best and that is where this Government has gotten. They do not particular wish to hear from Manitobans because they know best, and that is exactly where they are going, whether it is forced unionization or with pension legislation.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The hour being 12:30 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

#### IN SESSION

**Mr. Speaker:** The hour being 12:30 p.m., the House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

#### CORRIGENDA

Vol. LV No. 35 - 1:30 p.m., Monday, May 10, 2004, page 1904, in Mr. Mackintosh's opening Justice comments, the last paragraph of the first column inadvertently reads:

The efforts to reduce violence against women and gay activities in our neighbourhoods . . . .

The paragraph should read:

The efforts to reduce violence against women and gang activities in our neighbourhoods . . . .

In the same volume on page 1905, the third paragraph in the last column inadvertently reads:

But we also watched Canada's second provincial Web site for high risk sex offender notification and, after only one year, I am advised that there have been 12 000 visits to the site.

The paragraph should read:

But we also launched Canada's second provincial Web site for high risk sex offender notification and, after only one year, I am advised that there have been 12 000 visits to the site.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Friday, May 14, 2004**

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